

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bollington St. John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Grimshaw Lane, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5LY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chester
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Cheshire East
Date of inspection	26 April 2018
Date of last inspection	May 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	VA 111324
Headteacher	Melanie Walker
Inspector's name and number	Anne B. Woodcock 445

School context

Bollington St. John's school is smaller than average. It serves the community of Bollington near Macclesfield. The vast majority of the 103 pupils are of White British heritage and they come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding for social disadvantage is broadly average. The school supports an above average proportion of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities. The headteacher has been in post since September 2015. Pupil numbers have increased substantially since the last denominational inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bollington St. John's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong, determined Christian leadership and example of the headteacher, ably supported by dedicated staff and committed governors, has driven all aspects of school improvement. This has created a distinctly Christian learning environment in which every member of the school community can flourish and achieve.
- Well-established, explicitly expressed Christian values impact strongly on pupils' exemplary behaviour and remarkably positive attitudes to life and learning. They underpin the nurturing relationships which support and inspire all members of the school family.
- Pupils' outstanding spiritual and personal development is extremely well supported through the creative curriculum, religious education (RE) and collective worship.
- Strong links with the church contribute to the school's Christian distinctiveness and to pupils' spiritual growth.

Areas to improve

- Engage all members of the school community in a full review of the vision statement. This is so that all those associated with the school can more fully understand and support the core Christian vision.
- Support other church schools in their development by sharing Bollington St. John's excellent practice, particularly in relation to collective worship.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

Deeply embedded Christian values are thoroughly understood and lived by all members of the school community. Pupils of all ages talk confidently and maturely about Jesus' teaching through parables. 'Jesus used parables like the Good Samaritan to show how to treat everyone, whoever they may be' explained a Year 6 member of the ethos group. The calm, purposeful and welcoming atmosphere, which is immediately felt by visitors, creates a distinctive learning environment conducive to learning. This demonstrates that the school's aim, 'to provide a distinctive and collaborative approach to learning that enables everyone to flourish', is consistently promoted and achieved.

Behaviour is exemplary because pupils consistently strive to treat others with Christian respect and friendship. Pupils thoroughly enjoy all that the school offers, so attendance is high. They are eager, responsive and articulate learners who confidently express their ideas and opinions within an atmosphere of trust. High quality teaching and learning, aspirational targets and an innovative curriculum ensure that all pupils make good, sometimes rapid progress from their starting points. Standards of attainment are consistently above national averages. Those with special needs and/or disabilities are extremely well-supported so that everyone can achieve and blossom. Support for vulnerable pupils and their families is very well-considered and much appreciated by parents who say that this is a unique feature which exemplifies the school's distinctive Christian character.

The creative curriculum, based on the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), inspires and excites pupils. It ensures that their 'sights are broadened' and that they come to understand the diverse societies and needs of the world in which they live. Provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding is promoted particularly well. Frequent, high quality experiences, both in and out of school, support pupils' understanding of the world. Effective use is made of outdoor learning, such as the orchard, so that pupils explore God's world and learn to appreciate the awe and wonder of creation. They develop a sense of responsibility for its care and conservation. High quality displays of art, prose and poetry demonstrate the depth of pupils' reflections and responses. As a result, pupils are increasingly reflective and thoughtful learners. Their spiritual development is supported by the substantially strengthened links with St. Oswald's Church. Pupils' personal development and emotional well-being is extremely well-supported through extra-curricular activities, collective worship and the skilfully augmented curriculum. This includes 'academy weeks' which provide staff and pupils with creative, experiential learning opportunities through which they explore topics such as journalism.

Topic themes and excellent RE provide repeated opportunities for pupils to learn about and experience diverse cultures and beliefs. As a result, pupils have a well-developed understanding of global issues such as poverty and injustice. 'We support a boy in Uganda so that he can go to school and have a future like we do,' stated a Year 5 pupil. They appreciate and respect differences, including the way in which Christians in other countries celebrate and worship God.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a highly valued and integral feature of school life. Pupils' attitudes are extremely positive because they feel included and inspired. 'Worship is a perfect, faith-filled time to reflect on our day. We come together to think about God and others,' explained a Year 6 pupil. Worship is firmly based on Bible teaching and Christian values. Pupils have a remarkably good knowledge of Old Testament stories and they describe the life and teaching of Jesus fluently. They make clear links between parables, values and their own actions. A Year 6 member of the ethos group explained, 'Parables show us how much God wants to forgive and help us to be better people.'

Pupils of all ages talk confidently and honestly about God and Jesus. They are not afraid to express their beliefs and doubts, whilst acknowledging the right of others to believe differently. The youngest pupils talk about God as a father who cares for everyone. Older pupils show a remarkably mature understanding of the Christian concept of the Trinity. 'God's plan to forgive our sins needed Jesus to be on earth in human form. He sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It seems to make people stronger and more creative,' stated a Year 6 pupil.

Pupils experience a range of different worship styles led by staff, clergy and visitors. Both the vicar and children's minister at St. Oswald's are frequent visitors. They lead worship in school and in church. The church is used for services at festival times, which are attended by parents and friends. The church organises events such as 'Experience Easter' which contribute very significantly to pupils' spiritual growth. Pupils are familiar with aspects of traditional Anglican practice. For example, they attend a midweek Eucharist service, sharing worship and fellowship with members of the church community. Prayer and reflection are key features of daily worship. Pupils write and use their own prayers, some of which are displayed around school. Even young pupils willingly and confidently offer to say prayers 'from the heart' during worship.

The extent to which pupils are involved in planning and leading worship is exemplary. They demonstrate their understanding of the key features of Christian worship remarkably well. Monitoring and evaluation is highly effective because it engages all members of the school family at different times throughout the year. Records of governor, staff and pupil evaluations indicate the continued impact worship has on staff and pupils. This ensures that collective worship continues to improve.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils enjoy and are inspired by their work in RE. 'RE is extremely interesting because we do lots of different activities and discuss really important questions,' stated a Year 5 pupil. High quality teaching challenges and supports pupils in their exploration of ideas and beliefs so that all pupils can achieve and make good progress. As a result, standards of attainment are good, being in line with those achieved in other core subjects. The high quality of their work is demonstrated in displays and workbooks. Some pupils consider their work in RE to be superior to that achieved in, for example, English, because they are considering issues such as life after death, not punctuation.

Leadership is of the highest quality. Teachers feel well-supported and resourced so that they can deliver the syllabus confidently and well. Excellent use is made of professional development, particularly when introducing the new curriculum and assessment processes. Monitoring and evaluation processes are rigorous. Governors and senior leaders share regular book scrutinies, learning walks and observations. As a result, the school has a very clear idea of standards and rates of progress. Although assessment processes are being amended in the light of recent changes, they effectively identify gaps in learning and track progress to inform future planning. Marking is effective because it shows pupils how to improve. Pupils are engaged in assessing their own work and progress at the end of units of work.

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of diverse faiths and cultures is well-developed and mature. One Year 5 pupil stated, 'Many religions are linked by similarities. For example, they all have creation stories.' They talk confidently about key features of Judaism, Islam and Hinduism such as holy books, festivals and prayer. Visits to places of worship and the cross-curricular IPC themes broaden their first-hand experiences and deepen their understanding. RE therefore makes a very significant contribution to pupils' SMSC development and to the school's Christian character.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

The school is led extremely well by a calm, dedicated headteacher who, together with the senior teacher, staff and governors, has created a distinctive Christian environment in which every member is enabled to flourish. The harmonious staff team support each other extremely well. Everyone knows that their well-being is considered in all decision-making. This reflects the school's current mission statement. However, it is written in such a way that many find it difficult to recall or relate to what they see actually happening in school. As a result, it does not reflect the school's highly effective and distinctly Christian character, so clearly articulated by pupils, staff, parents and governors, strongly enough.

Governors have a very clear idea of their strategic role. They monitor and evaluate the work of the school robustly through frequent visits, observations and discussions. They ensure that the needs of all pupils are met through the effective use of human and financial resources. Governors have secured high quality leadership for RE and collective worship. Both are well-resourced and supported and both meet all statutory requirements. They have ensured that issues from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Changes have been monitored and continue to lead to improvement. The school's self-evaluation processes are rigorous. Feedback from staff, pupils, parents and governors is used and church school issues feature strongly in whole school improvement planning. Succession planning is well-considered and used constructively.

Effective use is made of a range of partnerships to support aspects of governance, curriculum and professional development. Diocesan training supports leaders and staff. Links with the high school provide enrichment experiences for staff and pupils. The school's established links with a Christian community in Uganda support pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith. The newly established link with a school in China is already having a positive impact on pupils' awareness of a very different culture and way of life to their own. Pupils are engaged in writing to these communities, helping to address misconceptions and stereotypes. The school is therefore very well placed to move confidently into the future and to share its experience, values and successes with others.