

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Great Bedwyn Church of England Primary School

Farm Lane, Great Bedwyn, Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 3TR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date/s of inspection	22 March 2018
Date of last inspection	13 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled, 126391
Headteacher	Nicola Williams
Inspector's name and number	Richard Wharton (835)

School context

Great Bedwyn is an average sized primary school, with a published admission number of 210 children, organised into seven classes. The proportion of children with disabilities or additional educational needs is lower than that seen nationally, as is the number of children from ethnic minority groups or who speak English as an additional language. The school is situated in the village of Great Bedwyn but serves a wide geographical area, with 37% of children attending from outside the village and coming from a range of social backgrounds. The headteacher of the school took up her post in April 2016 and is supported by an experienced senior leadership team.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Bedwyn as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- All members of the community clearly articulate the distinctively Christian values of the school and there is an exemplary level of engagement by all in the vision for education which arises from these values.
- All members of the school community are rightly proud of the distinctive character of their school and talk in impressive depth about the way in which it influences their relationships and decisions.
- Learners are excited and challenged by religious education (RE) and it plays a significant role in the distinctiveness of the school.

Areas to improve

- To refine the school's shared interpretation of spirituality in order to use this as a basis for developing further exemplary practice.
- To continue to widen the children's experience and understanding of other cultures, with particular reference to Christianity as a multicultural world faith.

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

The school revisited its vision and values statement in autumn 2016 in order to secure collective ownership of the Christian basis of its ethos by the whole school community. The vision and values image of the 'Great Bedwyn Hot Air Balloon', which was produced as a result of this work, has clearly been taken to heart by all members of the community and is used to underpin their understanding of what it means to be a distinctively Christian school. Within this vision image, the school's core Christian values of love, forgiveness, friendship, courage, respect and responsibility form the flames which provide the 'spiritual lift' for all members of the community to live their lives to the full. It is highly evident that the theological basis of these values has been explored to an impressive degree over the past five terms. Ongoing records of children's reflections on the values are held in values reflection books as part of the entrance display and on displays in classrooms, many of which are of exemplary quality, especially those seen in year 3. In discussing the Christian values, children were readily able to link them to Bible stories and discuss their Christian basis. One child commented that, 'These values are God's values because Christians believe that they describe what God is like and that's why they are our values.' The children are very clear about the ways in which these values impact on their behaviour and relationships and they highly value the 'Golden Leaf awards', which are presented to children who have exemplified the Christian values. One child commented that, 'You have to show your Christian values in all that you do because God wants people to be the best people that they can be and the values help you to do that.' Another child said that, 'All of the values are summed up by love really because God is love.'

All members of the school community feel strongly that the Christian ethos of the school forms the basis for the high academic standards which the children are able to achieve. Parents spoke effusively about the way in which excellent relationships and a very positive family environment have led to a focus on inclusion and individual needs, resulting in good progress for vulnerable pupils. Parents speak in glowing terms about the extent to which the Christian character of the school shapes relationships among the whole community and of the highly supportive ethos which this engenders. They also reported that the children talk about the values constantly and in a recent survey, 82% of parents felt strongly that they personally value the Christian ethos of the school. The school is highly inclusive in its approach and takes all steps possible in order to ensure that no children are left behind. The school offers a very impressive range of extra-curricular activities, which all children are encouraged to take part in and through which their wellbeing is enhanced.

The children clearly have a strong respect for diversity and there is ample evidence within their work of how RE fosters their understanding of a range of faiths. Representatives from other faiths have visited the school and the children have explored other cultures through activities such as a 'Diwali Day' and topics on Africa and Japan. Due to the geographical location of the school and related demographics, it is important that the school maintains a focus on broadening children's cultural awareness. The leaders are aware of this and have plans for further activities, particularly in relation to exploring Christianity as a multicultural world faith. The school has carefully integrated the Understanding Christianity resource into the Discovery RE syllabus and has used this as an excellent basis to support the Christian character of the school. Children's ability to reflect at significant depth on challenging concepts was displayed in lessons and in the children's work.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship is clearly of central importance in the life of the school and plays a key role in enabling children to make connections between Bible stories and the school's values. The worship observed was inspiring and enabled children to make links between the biblical value of forgiveness and their own experience. The worship effectively demonstrated the children's willingness to engage in thoughtful reflection and they were able to relate the content of the worship to stories and teachings of Jesus that they had explored on previous occasions. Singing clearly has a high priority within the school and the children reported that they understand this as a form of praise. The children were keen to show a video to accompany the school song that they have composed to express their values and distinctive ethos. The liturgy surrounding worship has been developed carefully to incorporate Anglican traditions and children are involved in a range of ways; a notable example being the way in which older children take responsibility for leading the younger classes in with a candle, which is then placed on the worship table. Support for collective worship from the local church is excellent and the Open the Book team leads worship on a fortnightly basis, with the vicar leading worship on alternate weeks. Worship is planned with care by the headteacher, clergy and children from the Worship Team.

The children attend the church for key services at the end of each term and these are seen as highly important events in the life of the school by all members of the community. The Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit has been deeply explored and the children are able to talk about this with an impressive level of understanding. Children have a very strong appreciation of the place of prayer within their school, as exemplified by the excellent prayer displays around the building. The children described how prayers are said at key times throughout the day (e.g. lunchtime and at home time) how they can say prayers using the 'prayer sacks' or in the spiritual garden. The children were clear that, 'You have to say prayers to make the world a better place, not just for yourself.' When asked how we can know what God would want us to pray for, the children related their thoughts back to the school values. The children are proud of their spiritual garden, which is used creatively for prayer and reflection in different ways at different times of the year. The children clearly have a growing sense of personal spirituality and they reflect deeply on their experiences. However, school's current interpretation of spirituality hasn't been fully explored and its potential not yet realised.

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

The headteacher has a strong belief in the importance of the school's church ethos, which she articulates with clarity and conviction and which she sees as forming the basis for the children's academic achievement. Since taking up post, she has been strongly supported by the senior leaders and governors in developing the distinctive identity of the school. This has included comprehensive planning to successfully address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. The senior leaders described this process as 'making explicit what was already implicit' and they are rightly proud of the way in which Christian distinctiveness now pervades the school as a 'golden thread'. The governors are equally committed to ensuring that the distinctive Christian character of the school remains paramount and have been engaged in detailed monitoring of the impact of the ethos as part of the school development plan. Outcomes from this are integrated into a rigorous cycle of further improvement. The governors are determined to ensure that the school retains its distinctive ethos as it moves to academy status. Partnership working with the diocese has been strong and the head has valued the support of the diocesan officers in developing the school's ethos over the past two years.

Parents say that the school is always open to their contributions and encourages them to engage in school life. The links with the local church and community are particularly valued and the school has engaged in some inspiring inter-generational work, in which the children have found out about the backgrounds of older volunteers who come into to support the school. The impact of the vision is evidenced in the many ways in which children are enabled to contribute independently to the life of the school. An outstanding example of this is the 'Kids Tusk Force' charity in support of orphaned elephants, which the children have set up and which they go out to other schools to promote.

The link with the local church is very strong; the vicar sees his role within the school as a central part of his ministry and this is very much valued by parents, school staff and children. The vicar, in turn, highly values the way in which he and other members of the church community are consulted regarding key activities. The RE is considered to be a core aspect of the school's provision and the RE leaders and have made an excellent contribution to the school through development of planning and supporting other teachers. The RE leaders have a detailed action plan which they monitor systematically with support of governors. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report, March 2018, Great Bedwyn CE VC Primary School Marlborough SN8 3TR