

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Bartholomew's Church of England VA Primary School

Goathland Avenue Longbenton Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 8FA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	North Tyneside
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Newcastle
Date of inspection	19 October 2016
Date of last inspection	6 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 108615
Headteacher	Richard Restall
Inspector's name and number	Alan Baker
Quality Assurance	Lyn Field NS 151

School context

St. Bartholomew's has seen considerable change since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher and a move to a shared building with St. Stephen's Roman Catholic (RC) Primary School. A new senior leadership team has recently been created. It remains a smaller than average primary school, with numbers steadying after recent fluctuation. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English are below national average. School deprivation levels, the percentage who receive pupil premium and those with special educational needs also sit slightly below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bartholomew's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Relevant and carefully chosen Christian values support and sustain the achievement of pupils and the well-being of the community.
- An experienced, insightful and effective headteacher guarantees a strong Christian direction which is followed eagerly by all members of staff.
- The importance of the wellbeing of all staff results in the exceptional care of pupils who, as a consequence, thrive in this welcoming school.
- Religious education (RE) is led by a dedicated and inspirational subject leader. She ensures that pupils have a strong understanding of Christianity and world religions, take great pride and ownership of their work and, above all, thoroughly enjoy learning.
- The passion of governors, guided by the forward thinking and determined chair, ensures the school's distinctively Christian vision positively impacts on their decision-making and relationships with the wider community.

Areas to improve

- Establish opportunities for pupils to be involved in the leadership of worship, in order to develop their knowledge of distinctively Christian worship routines and to offer opportunities to express their own spirituality.
- Increase the rigour with which governors monitor and evaluate the planning and delivery of both worship and RE.

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

Christian values of truth, forgiveness, compassion, thankfulness, humility, determination, excellence and service make it clear to members of the school how they should act towards each other. Pupils exemplify these well-chosen values and their impact is recognised by all members of the school. The high expectations of staff, and the effort of the pupils, impacts on skills which are low on entry but improve quickly across the school. The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that the Christian character of the school is of great importance. Staff live out the Christian values. They work hard to nurture and guide pupils who, as a result, take pride in their behaviour and attitudes to others. Pupils identify the different values which help them achieve this positive environment. Parents know that their children will be well looked after and treated with respect by all staff. The 'Son Seekers' group, which is run by parents, helps pupils to learn even more from the teachings of Jesus. The many attenders enjoy the group and like the help it offers them to be a better person. 'It makes me behave better here and for mammy' reflected one child.

Pupils speak passionately about their learning in RE and enjoy sharing their spirituality in creative ways. They know the UK is a multi-faith society and talk about other religions with great positivity. They understand the importance of respect, fairness and equality in society through the topics they have discussed in RE.

Opportunities to speak to visitors of a variety of faiths and to visit places of worship give them a positive understanding of the impact of religion on people's lives.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The Christian headteacher leads and coordinates worship and he has implemented a cohesive and inspirational three-year plan. The deeply Christian nature of this plan raises the aspirations of pupils and staff through the questions it sets. The Bible and Jesus are at the centre of planning and creating a strong theological knowledge in pupils. Pupils enjoy worship and are inspired by the stories they hear. The strong focus on the Bible allows even the younger pupils in school to talk about their understanding of the Trinity. Year 6 pupils like how the stories 'make us think more deeply'. They are enthusiastic about weekly 'memory verses' because they help worship to have a lasting impact. This positivity ensures that worship holds a vital position in the life and success of this church school.

Leaders understand the importance of corporate and personal prayer. This is brought into the classroom through use of a 'special place' and shared prayer boards. Pupils describe how they 'can tell God anything in a prayer' when they are worried. However, by having limited times to share their own prayers with others, during and beyond worship, opportunities to develop their own prayer life are sometimes missed.

The regular presence and unequivocal support of the vicar helps the school to engage positively in Christian experiences. Parents are appreciative of successfully created links via 'Messy Church' as they have drawn families to the church. A range of leaders give variation to both whole school and small group acts of worship planned for throughout the week. Pupils are enthusiastic about 'Monday worship', as the headteacher makes it 'fun' and training is in place to share these skills with staff. New staff receive high quality guidance in delivering worship and talk about the benefits it creates in the values and manners of the pupils. A clear routine and approach brings a distinctively Christian focus to the majority of services. Senior staff effectively monitor worship and this results in improvements to planning and delivery. Pupils, however, do not have a role in planning and delivering worship and this limits their opportunities to make use of the skills they learn in RE.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE now has a high profile within the school curriculum, with school leaders, staff and pupils describing its position as being alongside literacy and maths. Many Year 6 pupils see their RE book as the most important of all. Their enthusiasm for the subject is evident in the standard of work and their high levels of attainment. The RE leader has a clear vision and the drive to continually move the subject forward. Her teaching and the way in which she guides pupils to record their learning creates enthusiasm for the subject. House captains describe her as 'superb' and enthuse about RE as the 'most important thing in school'.

Support for Key Stage 1 staff and teaching alongside new teachers means that this outstanding practice is now shown across the school. Staff feel confident to deliver the subject creatively and effectively. Pupils make rapid progress and can reflect and express their understanding in a variety of forms. Younger pupils share verbally what they know about RE, whilst older pupils are more focussed on the significant impact RE has on their lives. Across the school, quality marking also ensures that gaps in RE knowledge are addressed. This supports school data showing attainment to be at least in line with, and often ahead of, the expected outcomes for the syllabus.

Planning is regularly reviewed to check that activities are creative and relevant to pupils' needs. The activities are designed to be thought-provoking and to give a strong awareness of Christianity and other world faiths. The RE curriculum supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of the pupils by being flexible in content in order

to respond to situations which affect them. Staff and parents know the impact RE has on the lives of their pupils. A parent described how her son had a much greater empathy for those of other faiths since learning more about them in RE. This is an example of how RE changes the lives of pupils and has an impact on the community and is, therefore, described by the school as a 'living curriculum'.

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

The headteacher has led the school through times of change, achieving significant progress as a church school. His insightful but caring leadership is appreciated by the school community. He is supported by a management team who are keen to develop their role as church school leaders by drawing on training and support from the diocese. Guidance and thorough evaluation by leaders identifies areas of focus and creates effective systems for improvement. This is demonstrated by the outstanding progress which pupils make between key stage one and two. Incisive decision making, particularly in developing the leadership of worship and RE, has had impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met.

A strong governing body, and committed chair, have set a Christian direction for the school in serving its community. Governors trust the headteacher and are now beginning to be more thorough in their monitoring. They have a strong presence in school and embody the ethos they have created. The unique relationship with St Stephen's School is the direct result of the vicar's vision for education in this community. The relationship plays an important role in creating this successful church school. Parents point to the progress made and many families are prepared to travel further because of the reputation of the school's ethos. Leaders are clear that the course they have now set will continue to steer the future of the school. The passion of governors for the relationship between the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church gives support to the school in the context of the changing face of education. The two schools have been able to share their 'faith, interests and goals'. The vicar's commitment to 'love and tolerance of others' as a non-negotiable principle in the vision for the school, is the inspiration behind the ground-breaking partnership they have forged.

SIAMS report October 2016 St Bartholomew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School NE12 8FA