

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bodsham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Canterbury
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Kent
Name of federation	Saltwood and Bodsham Federation
Date	14 June 2018
Date of last inspection	10 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 118673
Executive Headteacher	Paul Newton
Inspector's name and number	Melanie Williams 911

School context

Bodsham is a small, rural primary school of 89 pupils arranged in four classes. It is federated with a larger, voluntary aided church primary school. The executive headteacher for both schools has been in post since September 2017. There have been significant changes in leadership within the school over the last year. A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, English as an additional language or from disadvantaged families is well below the national average. There are strong, established links with the local group of churches.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bodsham as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values of love, strength and creativity are deeply embedded and well developed throughout the school, so that pupils apply them in their relationships and in the challenges that occur in daily life.
- Collective worship is consistently built on Biblical themes enabling pupils to gain a strong understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Governors and the incumbent confidently articulate and live out the values and aims of the school, providing excellent support and guidance to the new headteacher in his first church school.
- Leadership of religious education (RE) is strong, providing clear direction, support and training for staff across the federation. Consequently, pupils are theologically literate, expressing their thoughts with clarity.
- Leaders have a thorough grasp of the school's performance and distinctiveness. They have implemented strategies to enable staff to develop as leaders and to successfully secure improvement.

Areas to improve

- Develop opportunities through RE, collective worship and the wider curriculum to prepare pupils for life and to work for good in a diverse world.
- Develop the Christian vision of the school to clarify that it is underpinned by Biblical theology and ensure that this is clearly communicated to the whole community.

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

The school's Christian values of love, strength and creativity are very well established in the life of the school. These values are developed and deepened as pupils move up through the school. Pupils can identify Bible passages that illustrate them. For example, the story of Noah's Ark teaches them about courage and resilience as a development of strength. The Christian character of the school is clearly evident through symbols and displays throughout the site and in its weekly newsletters. The school works hard to meet the needs of all pupils, drawing on support from other agencies when needed. There have been no exclusions for many years. Efforts to reduce the incidence of persistent absence to below national averages have been successful. Attainment in the school is consistently well above national averages, with most pupils achieving expected standards and a high proportion working at a greater depth by the end of their time in the school. The school is diligent in valuing individuals and supporting pupils to reach their full potential. Strategies, put in place this year, have improved progress. Although many families do not attend church regularly, the school's values have clearly had a profound impact on pupils' spiritual development. They understand how the value of love influences them to treat people with kindness and compassion. As a result, behaviour is excellent. The very few incidents of poor behaviour are sensitively monitored and addressed. Pupils also have excellent opportunities through RE and collective worship to engage in experiences that cause them to reflect on spiritual matters. For example, pupils are articulate and knowledgeable in talking about Christian views of differences between heaven and earth. There is a shared understanding of spirituality based on exploring the bigger questions of life, faith and awe and wonder but this has not been formalised. Staff have received diocesan training on promoting spirituality in children. Pupils have taken part in projects to explore their spirituality through art, producing high quality work. Pupils use reflection areas in their classrooms to write prayers and make good use of the spiritual garden in the grounds. Cultural development is well supported by learning about different communities and faiths around the world in RE and through supporting charities such as Christian Aid. Pupils are well aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. They recall learning about the church in China from a visiting speaker and also that Christians have to meet in secret in some places around the world. Good use of images, such as a Nigerian Nativity scene, also broadens their experience. Pupils learn about other faiths through RE and readily identify similarities and differences in beliefs and customs. They like the range of activities offered in RE, particularly enjoying art, drama and poetry. The enquiry-based approach adopted recently in RE provides plenty of challenge and is seen as a model of good teaching and learning for future development in other subjects. Pupils are highly articulate in expressing their thoughts and feelings, often referencing ideas from previous learning.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to each day, drawing together all members of the school community. Planning is based on the diocesan scheme of work and adapted to the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils comment that they enjoy coming together and taking part. Activities include visual images, drama, dance, singing and story-telling which engage all ages. Pupils particularly enjoy the vicar's regular visits. Plans to provide a larger hall, that would allow for a wider range of activities, have not been implemented due to a lack of funding. Pupils are able to make links between their experiences in worship and daily life. For example, if they fall out, pupils know that forgiving one another is an expression of love and strength. Themes for worship are usually based on Biblical material and used to explore values. For example, the parable of the wise and foolish builders was used to illustrate the difference between being clever and being wise and the importance of making good choices. Pupils are familiar with Anglican traditions of worship. They begin and end with sentences and responses such as 'God loves us all the time. All the time, God loves us'. Pupils prepare for worship by lighting three candles to represent God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They can elaborate on different visual representations of the Holy Spirit. Singing songs helps to embed their learning. Christian festivals are celebrated throughout the year in line with the church calendar. Worship is sometimes held outdoors to celebrate special occasions such as Ascension and Pentecost. Pupils take the values explored in worship into their work. Examples of this include pointing out that perseverance in completing a task is a sign of strength and that choosing and supporting a charity shows love and compassion. One pupil said, 'God created the world and we are also made to be creative. The world would be less happy and colourful if we weren't'. Pupils can confidently recite The Lord's Prayer. When asked to reflect on their experience of worship during monitoring, they requested help with knowing how to pray. This led to a special activity day about prayer, led by the vicar. Pupils of all ages can talk about the life and person of Jesus Christ. They know that Jesus is central to worship and can discriminate between Christianity and other faiths in this respect. Pupils regularly lead aspects of worship such as setting up the hall, organising the music, reading Bible passages and making visual presentations. The Candle Club is a group of pupils who plan and lead worship each term. Occasional visits to the local churches and Canterbury Cathedral as well as use of the school grounds give pupils some variety in settings. The vicar and visitors from the Church Army and another Christian fellowship are much appreciated. Worship is monitored regularly by staff and governors and has led to an improved focus on prayer. However, parents' views of worship have not been sought.

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

Governors have consistently promoted and upheld the Christian ethos of the school through a period of significant change. They have provided excellent support and guidance for the new headteacher in his first headship of a church school. Consequently, the school has maintained its strong traditions and excellent practice in instilling Christian values throughout the community. The school has an established, well-publicised mission statement and aims that set out its Christian ethos. It has not yet framed a vision that clarifies its Biblical roots. Leaders identify examples of pupils referring to the values during the school day. They have a thorough understanding of school performance and distinctiveness through regular monitoring and self-evaluation routines. This has meant that plans and strategies for improvement are well founded and effective. The views of parents, pupils, staff and governors are all taken into account and shape the school's thinking. Collective worship and RE are strongly informed by and contribute to the Christian values and personal development of the pupils. There are further experiences for the development of values in place throughout the curriculum, but this is less well described. Parents help in many ways, such as by driving pupils to events in the mini-bus and undertaking maintenance work on Beautiful Bodsham day. Pupils regularly visit the local church for services and lessons. The church and school share resources and 'Messy church', an activity-based church service, is held in the school each month. Links with other schools have provided further sporting and cultural experiences. Supporting charitable causes has given pupils experience in leadership through which they can demonstrate their Christian values. The new head has taken advantage of the federation to provide new leadership positions in church schools for staff, with the benefit of more experienced mentors close at hand. The school has made full use of diocesan training to support and develop its leaders, ensuring that excellent practice has been sustained and developed. RE is strongly led by a specialist teacher. He has successfully introduced new teaching resources that have raised aspiration and challenge. The executive headteacher has taken on leadership of collective worship across the federation, acknowledging its importance in the life of church schools. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report June 2018 Bodsham Church of England Primary School, School Hill, Bodsham, Ashford, Kent. TN25 5JQ