

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Brighstone Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

New Road
Brighstone
Isle of Wight
PO30 4BB

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Portsmouth
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Date of inspection	23 May 2017
Date of last inspection	3 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 118192
Headteacher	Teresa Fox
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Brighstone is a smaller than average size primary school with 139 children on roll. The school has a wide catchment area which covers five parishes. The majority of children are of White British heritage and come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with special learning needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Recently, there have been significant changes in staffing. Following a time of turbulence in leadership, a headteacher was appointed in September 2016. The governing body has been reformed with a new chair and five new governors. Three teachers have recently been appointed in key stage 2.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Brighstone CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Children have a clear appreciation that Christian values make an important contribution to their wellbeing and help them in their learning.
- Acts of worship are important times in the school day when children and adults explore a deeper meaning to the core Christian values.
- The headteacher's commitment to the ongoing development of the Christian ethos is enabling the whole school community to develop a clearer understanding of what it means to be a church school.

Areas to improve

- Develop a shared understanding of spirituality so that the whole school community better appreciates how links between core values and the vision enhance children's development by having a greater impact on their wellbeing and learning.
- Raise standards in religious education (RE) by providing greater challenge for children to explore concepts in greater depth.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers, including governors, to ensure that development as a church school is integral to overall school improvement planning and impacts on all aspects of school life.

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

Following a review of the school's values in September 2016, a smaller core of three was chosen that the school community felt reflected the Christian ethos. These three core values 'love, courage and respect' are well known by children and staff throughout the school and are clearly displayed in classrooms and around the school. They form the basis of the programme of themes for collective worship and contribute to lessons and so make a valuable impact on a number of important aspects of school life. Children talk with confidence about courage and how it helps them in their learning and to build strong relationships. Older children have a mature appreciation that there are different kinds of courage which link to love. Indeed, they enjoy discussing questions such as 'do you need love to be courageous' or 'do you need courage to love?' Children understand that as a church school these three values link to Bible stories and that they learn about them from the teaching of Jesus. They have a growing awareness of how core values are helping them to appreciate an understanding of the nature of the Trinity and have the confidence to explore their own ideas about this. The school's vision, that it is 'a small school where big things happen', is well established and used by adults and children. The very high quality of relationships and care for children is a good example of a 'big thing' that is increasingly becoming linked to the school's core values, particularly through an exploration of love. The vision is also making a growing impact on the children's learning where the school has worked hard to improve the progress that children make and where an increasing number are attaining standards in line with national expectations. As yet, the full impact of the vision, working together with the three core values, has not been fully explored and its potential realised. The school is in a good place to look at this and take it forward. A key aspect of this development is the contribution of the children's spirituality and how it underpins the vision and values. Children have good opportunities to explore experiences of beauty and wonder but there is not a secure understanding of spirituality across the school. Children have a clear grasp of the difference between right and wrong and understand the moral choices they make. They know that they should treat others with dignity and respect regardless of whom they are or their background. The distinctive Christian ethos promotes inclusivity and a tolerance of all faiths and cultures. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the children's moral and social development and they enjoy asking questions and learning about a range of beliefs and cultures. The children relish the chances to explore because they know that is when 'big things' happen.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Acts of worship are an essential element in the overall Christian distinctiveness and make a valuable contribution to the promotion of the school's Christian vision and its core values. Indeed, worship helps children understand how values make 'big things happen'. They talk about stories from the Bible, such as the good Samaritan, and how it teaches them not to ignore someone in trouble but to stop and help them. Children appreciate that this is a 'big thing' because of its impact. The worship programme has been revised this academic year to ensure that children have opportunities to explore the three core values as well as how they link to a broader set of values. This is giving children a wider vocabulary through which they can articulate values in greater depth. There is still potential to develop this further as children deepen their understanding of how values, such as love and forgiveness, link together. A strong aspect of worship is the children's engagement and willingness to respond and share ideas. They eagerly talk to each other and are keen to tell the whole school what they think. On occasions these can be quite profound and reflect the children's ease with discussing matters of faith and belief openly in an environment in which they trust that they will be listened to with respect. They respond well to other elements of worship such as singing and reflection. Singing is joyous and reflection is moving. Children understand how to respond to these times with an appropriate reverence because worship is an important time in the school day. Similarly, they show a marked degree of respect to prayer. They know that prayer is a time to talk to God and that He will listen to them no matter who they are. Younger children willingly discuss how they use prayer to help them when times may be hard. Older children appreciate that prayer may not always be answered in the way that is expected, saying that we cannot understand God's will. Children have good opportunities to pray throughout the school day; whether it be in worship, at lunch or using the prayer areas in each classroom. The lighting of three candles to mark the start of worship helps children to remember the Trinity. Children have a good grasp of the nature of the Trinity and confidently share their views on God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are developing their appreciation of how each aspect of the Trinity is somehow linked together; they realise that it is a mystery and one that they may never fully fathom. Worship at the local church is an integral aspect of the worship experience. Monthly worship in the church, including a half-termly celebration of Eucharist, is well established as is the recognition of major festivals such as harvest and Easter. Children regularly help with collective worship by contributing through participation in drama and helping with its organisation. There are fewer opportunities for them to actually plan and lead worship on a regular basis. Some monitoring of worship has taken place by governors and children's views have been sought.

The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory

The school is in the process of implementing the latest version of the RE syllabus at the same time as a number of new staff are developing their knowledge and understanding of the concepts upon which the syllabus is based. Their confidence is growing and the quality of learning and opportunity to experience good quality RE is becoming more consistent across the school. The RE curriculum, built upon the latest version of the Living Difference syllabus, is currently being reviewed to ensure progression in the sequence of what is covered across year groups so that children build on their knowledge and understanding from year to year. All of this is work in progress. The introduction of 'big books' in RE in the autumn of 2016 has provided the means to capture a wide range of children's responses to RE through annotated pictures, their comments from discussions and class debates. This is giving a broader base from which children's progress can be measured when assessed alongside the work in their books. The school is still in the process of developing a secure assessment system to measure attainment in RE. The recent gathering of evidence of work is helping teachers to recognise the standards expected for the children's age and is beginning to be used to moderate the accuracy of the teacher's judgements. Again, this is work in progress. Currently a lack of secure assessment data in RE means that it is difficult to measure the progress of different groups of children over time. Work in the children's books shows that there is a good balance of acquiring knowledge about a range of religions and applying this to help them have an understanding of religion. There is a lack of consistency across some classes of evidence in books to show that children have been regularly receiving RE lessons either weekly or in blocks of lessons. Teaching at its best encourages children to explore concepts in depth and challenges the children's ideas and opinions. When this happens, children are animated, enthused and eagerly respond. They listen with respect to the views of others and are confident to say what they think. At times they find it hard to express their thoughts because they cannot find the language to articulate their views in depth and this puts a ceiling on the extent to which learning progresses. The RE leader took over responsibility for the subject in April 2016 and has been overseeing the introduction of the revised syllabus and improving assessment.

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

The appointment of the headteacher in September 2016 provided the catalyst for the school to look afresh at its Christian ethos and regain a sense of direction as to where, as a community, they wished to take a distinctive vision. To this end, the headteacher has been very successful in setting the foundations for a stronger ethos based more explicitly on core Christian values and a vision that has meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. She is supported by her staff and governing body, who share the vision to put love at the heart of all the school does. There is a very passionate articulation of how the love that underpins all that the school does provides the springboard for 'big things to happen'. Together, leaders and managers have a clear grasp of the school's strengths as a church school, based on accurate self-evaluation, and understand the steps that will help the school to develop its ethos over the next few years. Moreover, the headteacher and other leaders, have a strong commitment to continue to improve and have a good capacity to do so. Currently development as a church school is not an integral aspect of overall school improvement planning and how it underpins the strategic direction of the school is not yet central to the improvement process. A large number of governors have recently been appointed and are settling into their role. Some have undertaken specific training in church school governance, provided by the diocese, which they are beginning to apply to acquire greater knowledge and skills to help them more effectively monitor and evaluate as a church school. Some of this has already been undertaken but not yet on a regular basis which feeds into identifying further priorities for development. During the long vacancy while looking for a new rector, the school has been very well supported by local clergy; one of whom has joined the governing body, observed some RE lessons and regularly contributes to acts of worship in the school. She is herself supported by members of the church community, including the lay minister and two youth workers, who regularly contribute to collective worship. Links with the nearby church are strong and mutually beneficial. The headteacher and children regularly contribute to services such as Mothering Sunday and there is currently a half-termly celebration of Eucharist which the whole school attends. The support, through charitable work, for a community in Africa is a reflection of the emphasis the school places on reaching out through its values of love beyond the immediate neighbourhood and encourages children to develop their understanding and appreciation of diverse communities. Parents say that this is a valuable aspect of the work of the school and are glad that their children learn about a range of faiths in RE. They say that the Christian ethos is found in values that are universal and inclusive whether from a faith background or not. In particular, parents feel that the school's values create an environment which is a 'haven' for their children that encourages them to put the feelings and needs of others first. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.