

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Benedict's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Benedict Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9EX	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Bath and Wells
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Somerset
Date/s of inspection	24 November 2016
Date of last inspection	14 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 123833
Headteacher	Steve Gumm
Inspector's name and number	Tracey Khodabandehloo 879

School context

St Benedict's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School is situated in the town of Glastonbury. The school caters for pupils from Year 3 to Year 6. A new head teacher has been appointed since the last SIAMS (SIAS) inspection in 2011. This is an average sized junior school with 221 pupils on roll. St Benedict's is the only school in Glastonbury for Junior aged children. There is an above average percentage of pupils who receive free school meals (13%) and the pupil premium grant (29%). There is a growing number of pupils for whom English is an additional language (9%). Before and after school care is provided from 8.00am until 6.00pm. The school is linked with the parish church of St Benedict's.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Benedict's Junior as a Church of England school are good

- The school has a distinctively caring Christian ethos. This Christian ethos ensures an inclusive environment in which the value, creativity and uniqueness of all individuals are celebrated.
- The Christian character has a positive impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- The vicar and ethos committee are instrumental in effectively promoting and developing the Christian character of the school.
- Warm relationships and extending hospitality are hallmarks of the school. These two aspects are clearly identified as the outworking of the school's distinctively Christian values.
- Religious Education (RE) has an important place in the curriculum and contributes to the Christian character of the school. Children understand Christianity as a world faith and participate confidently and reflectively in RE lessons.

- Ensure the work to establish links between the school's Christian values, curriculum values and its motto clarify an understanding of its Christian character and mission.
- In order to enable children to develop their personal prayer and spirituality, extend opportunities for prayer and reflection in the outside environment.
- Build on progress made in the RE curriculum by implementing the newly identified curriculum materials in order that the attainment of learners is further improved.
- Develop opportunities in RE and collective worship to improve children's knowledge of the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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

The Christian character of the school is clearly and sensitively promoted so that all learners benefit. The stated core curriculum aim that learners ‘admire the wonders of God’s world together and share and care for everyone and everything in it’, is lived out in a school that celebrates the creativity and uniqueness of all pupils. Fifteen distinctively Christian values have been adopted by the school and it is developing the links between these and the learning values (Elli) at the core of lessons. The Christian character of the school is evident in prominent and creative displays and the children speak of how these act as a reminder to them of their school values. For example, children were able to point out that the newly painted mural of St Benedict reminds them of the importance of hospitality and welcome in their school community. Stained glass windows in every classroom, made by the children, provide a focal point for reflection or, if children choose, prayer. Children talk about these windows with understanding and pride. Faiths other than Christianity are respected and the diverse community is celebrated. The school has considered carefully what it means to be a church school in a diverse community and works sensitively with families from all faith backgrounds and none. The Christian belief that all are equal in the sight of God underpins this approach and children speak eloquently and with commitment of this being a school where all are welcome. They are able to express their thoughts around spirituality clearly and confidently. There is a particularly strong emphasis on creative and social development and children’s all round growth is celebrated and promoted. Relationships are strong across the school community and are based on Christian values of compassion and forgiveness. Children are able to make the connection between the highlighted Christian values and their behaviour and relationships. RE provides the opportunity for all in the school community to understand and appreciate diversity and difference. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong and this stems from the school’s Christian values and distinctive Christian character. The school has developed some quiet areas in the outside space to promote spiritual reflection and these are used by children when they want time away from the main playground. Pupils feel safe and nurtured at school. Their thoughtful behaviour and the link with the Christian values underpinning that behaviour is acknowledged by many in the school community. Kindness is a core value and one child explained this strength of St Benedict’s Junior School by saying, “what is good about this school is how much kindness we have”. The school excels at demonstrating a distinctively Christian ethos and environment and also being a place where people from all belief backgrounds are welcomed and cared for. One older child, when asked for a word to describe relationships at the school, used the fitting and appropriate Christian word for unconditional and unselfish love – agape. The care and nurture of children is a strength of the school and achievements are celebrated. Distinctively Christian values are clearly expressed and linked to many aspects of school life and learning. The Beehive for example, provides a warm and inclusive area for learning and exploring values in a small group setting and the playground buddy system works well in ensuring no child feels alone at playtimes. The values driven curriculum and core Christian values have a positive impact on the academic achievements of pupils and their spiritual development. The rate of pupil progress has steadily improved over the last three years meaning that the school is now often meeting and sometimes exceeding national expectations in English and Maths. Children are able to explain clearly how values affect their approach to learning and as a consequence are more equipped to overcome obstacles to achievement.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a time when school values are explored in their Christian context. It is seen by children as an important part of school life. The impact of collective worship on the life of members of the school community is evident and children speak with enthusiasm about the songs they sing and their involvement in prayer. Collective worship is Christian in nature and respectful of other faiths. Children are able to recount stories, including Bible stories such as the Good Samaritan, Jesus and Zacchaeus and the wisdom of Solomon. Involvement in collective worship by the wider Christian community is a strength. Children are enthusiastic about collective worship led by members of the Christian community including the local vicar and the Open the Bible team. These visitors impact positively upon the experiences of pupils. They are instrumental in developing the Christian values and ethos of the school. Children know the Lord’s Prayer and are confident to make up their own prayers on the spot as impromptu contributions at the conclusion of collective worship. Children understand the Christian nature and the purpose of prayer both within and outside collective worship. There is opportunity for prayer within each classroom if a child wishes and their own handwritten post-it notes contain prayers of thanksgiving and prayer requests. For those children who would prefer not to pray they may write down their hopes or dreams. This allows all children to be included. The creation of outdoor space for personal prayer and reflection has begun, however, this is not yet fully established. The school has begun to explore the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit though pupils’ understanding is limited. The ethos committee, made up of governors and staff, has been instrumental in monitoring, evaluating and developing the collective worship at the school. Their work in this area has led to improvements in the pattern of collective worship and the encouragement of all staff to become involved. This has had a positive impact on the experiences of collective worship for children and staff and has enhanced the ethos of the school as a church school. The end of day prayer “Go in peace to love and serve and do our best” is said by all

classes and children are able to explain how this can be said in a Christian context and how the words and values in the prayer can also be said by all, regardless of faith, background or belief.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) is given a high profile in the school. A key priority since the last inspection has been the improvement of the RE curriculum and standards. Because of this focus by the school, standards in RE have improved and are good. The quality of RE teaching is good and RE is well led by the RE subject leader. She has attended courses through the diocese and has implemented recommendations from this training. The impact of courses in assessing RE and subject development for example, has led to improved practice in these areas. In RE lessons the children reflect thoughtfully upon issues and analyse well. For example, in a Year 6 RE lesson on the arrival of the angel Gabriel to tell Mary of the forthcoming birth of Jesus, children were able to write insightful accounts from both the view of Mary and of Joseph. The children make good use of vocabulary when they are engaging in RE lessons and demonstrate a secure knowledge of the Bible. Children are confident in RE lessons and readily put forward suggestions and ask questions. In a lesson on the mezuzah in Judaism, Year 3 children showed good observational and analytical skills when handling religious artefacts. Skilful questioning on the part of the teacher enabled children at all levels to be engaged and this meant that all learners were able to participate fully and make good progress during the lesson. Children understand Christianity as a world faith and talk confidently about the subject. They understand the main practices and beliefs of faiths other than Christianity. Religious education contributes well to the distinctively Christian character, helping pupils understand one another and enabling them to appreciate diversity and difference in the school and beyond the school. It also contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners. The curriculum allows for creativity in the teaching of RE and provides for a variety of approaches and encourages interaction and discussion between pupils. The pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the subject and can discuss and reflect critically upon what they have learned.

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

Governors are enthusiastic about the work of the school in relation to the distinctive Christian character. They are engaged with the school leaders in strategic planning in the area of church school distinctiveness. Governors know the school well and their role in the monitoring and evaluating of the school's Christian character has led to improvement. The work the ethos committee, which consists of governors, staff and the vicar, demonstrates a passion for and commitment to developing the school and its Christian identity. The committee has ensured that development planning and action has taken place and this has resulted in improvements in experiences for pupils. The work of the committee, for example, has led to the introduction of a daily classroom prayer, increasing participation in collective worship and extending the opportunities for promoting the Christian character of the school environment through murals and artefacts. The committee has provided good support for leaders of collective worship and RE, enabling them to fulfil their roles effectively. Developments are coupled with a strong awareness and sensitivity of the wider community being served. The headteacher provides clear, committed and values-driven leadership based on Christian principles which inform the drive to develop pupils pastorally and academically. Developing good relationships and extending hospitality are the hallmarks of the school and are the outworking of the Christian vision spoken of by the governors and head teacher. The relationship with parents is strong. Parents, for example, are supportive of the school and its aims and speak highly of the caring leadership provided. Parents also comment positively on the sense of community. They believe that their children are happy and feel cared for. There is an appreciation amongst the parent body of the links in the parish and how these links enhance the educational provision for pupils. The St Benedict's Church building for example, has provided the school with a large flexible space for collective worship and learning activities. Recent visits from the Bishop of Taunton and the Archbishop of Canterbury have been enthusiastically received by pupils and parents alike and have reinforced the Christian standing of the school in the community. The partnership between church community and school is highly effective and has contributed significantly to the experiences of pupils with the vicar for example, being involved in both school improvement planning and providing spiritual guidance. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is a strength of the school. The values centred curriculum (Elli) enables learners to talk about and reflect upon their approaches to learning in an articulate and insightful manner. The formal link between the fifteen distinctively Christian values and the Elli learning values is strengthening as is the link with the school mission statement Dream, Believe, Achieve. All previously identified areas for development have been addressed by the leadership and this has resulted in a strengthening of the Christian character of the school. The arrangements for collective worship and religious education meet statutory requirements.

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