

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Barnabas' CE (Aided) Primary School

Hart Street Jericho Oxford OX2 6BN	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	N/A
Date of inspection	9 November 2017
Date of last inspection	13 December 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 123211
Headteacher	Fiona Hawkins
Inspector's name and number	Ian Lewis 629

School context

St Barnabas' is an average-size primary school with 211 pupils currently on roll. It serves the parish of Oxford St Barnabas with St Thomas Martyr and is situated in the centre of Oxford's Jericho district. The majority of the children are from the local catchment area. The school has an extremely fluid and diverse community with over twenty languages being spoken together with many and varied cultural, social and faith backgrounds. A very strong and beneficial partnership has been created with the parish church, its clergy and community.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Barnabas' as a Church of England school are good

- The school has a strong Christian ethos firmly centred on distinctly Christian values. This has created a school community in which every member is loved and cared for as a child of God. As a direct result, pupils at St Barnabas' achieve and progress to the best of their individual abilities both academically and socially.
- Very strong leadership by the head teacher together with an extremely dedicated team of staff and governors has ensured that the school flourishes as a distinctly Christian community. This shapes the lives and learning of all in the spirit of Jesus Christ.
- The school has established a strong and mutually beneficial partnership with the parish community and in particular the clergy. This has enhanced the school's ethos of love and care, and further strengthened it as a supportive and nurturing community.

Areas to improve

- In order that all in the school's community are able to develop spiritual strength through prayer and reflection, ensure that there are places throughout its environment for quietly communing with God.
- To further challenge pupils' thinking in RE and to enable them to deepen their understanding of Christianity and other faiths, devise systems to be used consistently throughout the school for questioning strategies to be used alongside teachers' comments when marking work.
- To ensure that the school's Christian ethos continues to strengthen and be embraced by all in the community, devise and implement strategies to actively involve a wide range of stakeholders in the monitoring, evaluation and development of its Anglican character.

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

At the heart of the life of St Barnabas' school is a strong and caring ethos. This is very firmly based on the Christian values of peace, friendship, truthfulness, trust, respect, courage, encouragement, responsibility, resilience and friendship together with curiosity and creativity. These are known by all in the school's community and are promoted within the school's environment and on all communications. Parents describe how the values shape their children's attitudes and behaviour encouraging tolerance and inclusiveness. 'The values transcend faith and non-faith' is a typical comment. The pupils themselves say of the values: 'They are a big part of the school and help us improve our lives'. The school's ethos, exemplified in the love and care shown to all as children of God, encourages and enables its pupils to develop confidence in their individual abilities. Because of this they love learning and discovering, resulting in good overall attainment and progress evidenced in the school's performance data.

The school's Christian care for each child results in the more vulnerable pupils being identified and given targeted support resulting in their increased confidence and ultimate progress. As an integral part of this care, the school's leaders have employed the services of a psychotherapist to work with those who are most vulnerable enabling them to achieve to the best of their individual abilities.

Religious education (RE) and collective worship play an extremely important role in the continuing development of the school's Christian ethos. This is a direct result of a strong focus on the values through Biblical teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. The excitement of discovery through questions and discussion found in RE lessons extends to other areas of the curriculum resulting in pupils who are eager to learn and achieve. As a direct result of the school's own diversity together with learning about other faiths and cultures in RE and collective worship, the children at St Barnabas' are developing a good understanding of Christianity as a world faith. Further to this they understand that Christians worship in a variety of ways and settings dependent on culture and circumstances. Pupils demonstrate great respect for and interest in one another's faiths, cultures and traditions. This is further enhanced through the school's programme of visits to places of worship and visits from representatives of faiths being studied in RE.

There is a good sense of spirituality within the school. The children speak confidently about prayer, giving clear evidence that they are developing an understanding of its nature and purpose. They say, 'Prayer is about talking to God – and the sky's the limit!' There are opportunities for reflection and prayer throughout the day. However, the school is not yet outstanding in this area as it has not fully developed and established strategies throughout the school for pupils to develop and express their personal spirituality.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is extremely important in the life of this school. Through it the Christian values underpinning everyday life are affirmed and strengthened. This is achieved through distinctly Biblical teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. The overall impact of collective worship is clearly evidenced throughout the school in the way in which its community treats one another with love and respect. All in the school say they feel deeply included in worship whatever their faith, if any.

Collective worship is enjoyed by all, this being particularly evidenced in discussion with the children and parents. 'When we go to worship it helps us. We think about other people's lives and want to say thanks' is a typical pupil comment. Enjoyment was very evident in the act of worship observed in which all in the school's community took part with clear enthusiasm. The children are closely engaged throughout worship, listening intently and responding eagerly to questions from the leader. They join in enthusiastically with prayer and song, the prayers being confidently led by some of the pupils. Observation together with discussion with staff, children and parents gives clear evidence of the centrality of prayer and of the person of Jesus Christ. As a direct result, the children understand the importance of prayer in worship and are keen to write and contribute their own. Children and staff say how much the centrality of prayer in the daily life of the school has been enhanced through their enjoyment of the Prayer Spaces project. There is strong reference to the concept of the Trinity during worship. The words 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' are specifically used throughout. This, and frequent visits to St Barnabas' church for both worship and curriculum purposes clearly strengthen the children's understanding of the threefold person of God.

The strong links with the church and its clergy are developing the children's knowledge of Anglican tradition and practice. Observation and discussion with the children and school leaders gives evidence that they are becoming very familiar with Anglican responses. Pupils take an active part in worship and have good opportunities to plan and lead themselves. As a direct result they are developing a good understanding of the Christian nature of worship in the school. Parents describe how much they appreciate attending worship whenever possible particularly, they say, for the weekly celebration events and the regular occasions it is held in the church. Overall planning for collective worship, led by the head teacher as co-ordinator is meticulous and involves both staff and pupils. Both quality of provision and impact of daily worship on the school's community are rigorously monitored and evaluated. This process involves gathering the views and opinions of stakeholders making all feel part of what parents describe as the 'school family'. Evaluations arising from the monitoring process are discussed by the school's leaders and lead directly to continued development and improvement as evidenced in the planning documents.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) occupies a very important position in the school's curriculum. Through it the children are developing a good understanding of the school's Christian values through a clear focus on Biblical teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. Pupils say how much they enjoy their RE lessons saying they find them interesting and fun. This enjoyment was clearly evidenced in the two good RE lessons observed. Pupils were avidly interested, taking an active part through asking and responding to questions. Both lessons gave evidence of excellent questioning techniques by the teachers. These constantly challenge the children's thinking and elicit thoughtful answers. The school's values are very much in evidence, the children listening and showing respect for each other's views. The close links with the school's Philosophy for Children programme is much in evidence challenging the pupils to tackle deep questions regarding faith and life. This has resulted in children who are developing an interest in learning and are keen to ask challenging questions themselves.

RE is strongly led by the knowledgeable co-ordinator who works closely with staff in all aspects of planning, especially in embedding the new curriculum recently adopted by the school. As a result, they are becoming confident in the teaching of RE and subsequently deliver the agreed syllabus effectively. This has resulted in overall good teaching and learning and ultimately in the children's clearly developing knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their progress and attainment is carefully tracked, records showing that it is at least in line with the core subjects. However, RE is not yet outstanding as the new curriculum has not at this time been sufficiently embedded for consistently high standards to be achieved.

RE provision is regularly monitored and evaluated by the co-ordinator. This is mainly achieved through lesson observation and a scrutiny of children's work. The results of monitoring are discussed by the leadership team and are used to inform future planning and improvement as evidenced in the development planning documents. The marking of pupils' work shows overall consistency, with relevant comments being made by the teacher. There is, however, insufficient use made of challenging questions during marking to further extend and deepen pupils' thinking.

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

The leaders of St Barnabas' Primary School have established a very strong and effective Christian ethos. This, through its basis in Christian values, drives all aspects of the school's life. It is very evident in the behaviour and attitudes of the children who treat all around them with care and respect. All adults within the school are excellent exemplars, showing love and care to all in the school's community. Through this the children enjoy being at school and love learning. As a direct result of the school's nurturing ethos the children are developing confidence in their own abilities and thus achieve well both academically and socially. The school's leaders actively promote the school's Christian ethos so that all in its community embrace its values. The impact of this is evidenced in the love, care and support that all within the school show for each other.

The school's Anglican distinctiveness is strongly valued, the leadership team regularly monitoring and evaluating its impact on the community. However, there is insufficient involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in this process and subsequently the leadership and management is not yet outstanding. The children have a strong voice within the school through, for example, the school council and prayer group. They appreciate this and say that they know that the school leaders listen to them.

Leadership potential is recognised and nurtured through targeted professional development ensuring the continuing effectiveness of St Barnabas' as an Anglican school. This has resulted in strong middle management and the good teaching and learning evidenced within the school. The impact is further seen in the strong leadership of both RE and collective worship resulting in the good provision and progress evidenced in each. Both meet current national requirements. The school has very strong and beneficial links with the diocese. This has resulted in good continuing and effective development in collective worship and RE. Diocesan training has also enabled the governing body and in particular the foundation governors to develop their knowledge and expertise in managing this as a good church school. Leaders have firmly addressed and met all the areas for development from the previous inspection.

The school's distinctive Anglican character is further strengthened through the firm partnership established with the parish church and its clergy who maintain a beneficial presence within the school. Their close involvement strongly supports the school's Christian leadership and further enhances the provision for collective worship and RE. Through the school's strong involvement with the local Jericho community, the children are developing a good understanding of what community means and of their roles and responsibilities as citizens in the wider world.