

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Barnabas Church of England School

St Barnabas Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 3HB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Peterborough
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	October 2014
Name of multi-academy trust	Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET)
Date of inspection	24 November 2016
Date of last inspection	March 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled I22000
Headteacher	Susan Campbell
Inspector's name and number	Janet Northing 792

School context

This is a two form entry infant school set in the middle of a residential area on the edge of Wellingborough. Approximately two thirds of the pupils are White British and 9% of pupils have English as an additional language. 16% of pupils attending the school are supported by pupil premium, which is lower than the national average. The number of children with a special educational need or disability is also below the national average. The school joined Peterborough Diocese Education Trust in October 2014 as a sponsored academy. The headteacher joined the school in September 2013.

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

- The explicit Christian leadership of the headteacher and chair of governors impacts positively on securing the school's Christian vision.
- The school's partnership with St Barnabas Church contributes significantly to the distinctive Christian character of the school and the lives of learners and their families.
- The school's Christian ethos underpins the positive relationships evident between all members of the school community.
- Religious education (RE) makes a positive contribution to the Christian character and values of the school and to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

Areas to improve

- Formalise the role of the SMSC committee to secure the on-going progress and development of the school as a church school.
- Fully embed the school's Christian values through a more explicit and consistent application in both policy and practice.
- Develop a shared interpretation of spirituality that finds practical expression in the learning environment and curriculum as a whole to enable pupils to explore their spirituality more deeply.

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

The school's vision is expressed in the statement: 'Working together we can aspire, learn and achieve.' Six Christian values underpin this vision and impact positively on relationships in this caring and nurturing church school. Although referenced by biblical quotes around the school, most pupils do not readily give biblical examples when talking about them. The impact of the school's distinctive Christian character is evident in pupils' improving progress and academic attainment across Key Stage 1. Standards in reading, writing and maths are now consistently above the expected standard nationally. In addition, current attendance levels are above the national average, which is a clear indication of the impact of the school's Christian ethos on pupil wellbeing. The provision of a family support worker is enabling the school to support families to ensure that pupils' attendance remains consistently high. Although pupils' behave well the link between behaviour and the school's Christian values is not explicit in policy or in practice. The school community operates as an extended family creating a safe and secure Christian learning environment. As a consequence, pupils from a range of different backgrounds flourish and their SMSC development is good. However, the school lacks a clear definition of spirituality that is shared by most adults. Although worship and extra curricular provision has a positive impact on pupils' SMSC development, planned experiences are not identified within the curriculum to explore spirituality more deeply. A 'Jesus And Me' after school club run by staff at the school supports pupils in exploring Christianity in fun and creative ways. RE makes a good contribution to the school's Christian character and pupils' SMSC development. For example in a Year 2 RE lesson pupils considered people who inspire them and why. Exploring links with the school values and famous people from different backgrounds, pupils considered personal qualities in others that they might aspire to. RE books reflect the pupils' understanding of this concept, 'Jesus inspires Christians because He listens to others' and 'People share because Jesus shares.' Cultural days designed to celebrate the diversity of faiths and backgrounds within the school community enable pupils to experience Christianity as a worldwide faith. In this way children are also learning to show respect to those whose faith is expressed in different ways to their own.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

All members of the school community articulate the centrality of collective worship to the life of the school. For example adults describe worship as a time when they find calmness, encouragement and refreshment in the midst of the busyness of the school day. Pupils particularly enjoy listening to Bible stories about God and Jesus that exemplify the school values in their Christian context. A Year 2 child illustrated this in using the Old Testament story of Ruth and Naomi as an example of two women showing kindness and friendship. In addition, themes for collective worship focus on exploring the social and emotional aspects of learning, as well as following the Christian calendar. Staff and a good range of visitors, including clergy from St Barnabas Church, lead worship. Pupils experience worship in church regularly throughout the year when celebrating the major Christian festivals. In addition, they all visit the church to experience key events in the Christian calendar more deeply through 'Experience Easter', 'Experience Pentecost' and 'Experience Harvest'. This impacts positively on developing pupil's spiritual awareness through thoughtful presentations on different aspects of each Christian celebration by church members. Once a fortnight the worship focus is 'Open The Book' led by a foundation governor. Giving the Bible a prominent place in worship, it places the school values within a Christian context that the children can then apply to their own lives. This rich provision impacts positively on children's SMSC development and their appreciation of the purpose and place of worship in their lives. Pupils experience God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through celebrating the Christian festivals and the blessing given by clergy both in school and church. As an infant school, the children's awareness of the significance of the Trinitarian nature of God is at an age appropriate level. Anglican tradition is reflected in worship with coloured cloths indicating the seasons of the church's year though not all children understand their relevance. Prayer is key in the life of the school. Worship begins with a responsorial prayer and the school prayer and Lord's Prayer are used regularly in worship. In addition, prayer features at lunchtime and the end of the day. The children contribute to weekly prayers that take place before school. Children describe prayer as both talking and listening to God, saying thank you and asking for help. Some children use prayer at home as part of their own spiritual journey. Pupils recognise that as a church school it is important to support others who are in need, especially children. Although learners contribute to worship in a variety of ways their experience of planning and leading worship is limited. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by the SMSC committee currently lacks focus on impact and pupil voice. For example, provision for Christian reflection outside of collective worship currently involves a prayer space two lunchtimes per week. Pupils would like a space for prayer and reflection to be permanently accessible to them to support them in their spiritual journey.

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

The headteacher and chair of governors are passionate in articulating a clear Christian vision for the school. Their desire to lead and manage in a manner that seeks to mirror the example of Jesus Christ finds practical expression in many areas of school life. For example, the impact of the school's Christian vision is evident in rising standards of attainment across Key Stage 1. In addition, the provision of a family support worker results in current attendance levels that are above the national average. Children, staff and parents articulate their experience of the school as an extended family and exemplify the positive impact this has on their sense of wellbeing. Staff development is given a high priority and planned strategically to maximise the benefits for both staff and pupils. In this way the school raises staff aspiration and effectively prepares those who have the potential to be leaders of church schools in the future. The RE subject leader is well supported in her role and is accessing professional development that impacts positively on teaching and learning in the classroom. She is undertaking training in Understanding Christianity and has been instrumental in the school successfully achieving the Bronze RE Quality Mark. Progress and attainment in RE is in line with the other core subjects and the statutory requirements for both RE and collective worship are met. The close proximity of St Barnabas Church to the school means that the children see the church as an extension of their school. However, its impact on the distinctive Christian character of the school and the lives of the children and their families goes far deeper. Parents speak warmly of the involvement of both clergy and lay people from St Barnabas Church in the life of the school. Some parents are explicit in choosing the school for their children because of its church school status and the strong Christian ethos. Governors and staff are benefitting from the high quality professional development and collaborative support offered by PDET since the school's academy conversion in October 2014. Meetings of the governing body begin and end with prayer reflecting the Christian character of the school. A standing agenda item focuses on the Christian distinctiveness and values of the school. The SMSC committee, made up of foundation governors and clergy, meets to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character. Currently, the infrequency of meetings, lack of formal rigour and feedback to the governing body limits its potential to fully secure the development of the school as a church school.

SIAMS report November 2016 St Barnabas Church of England School, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 3HB