

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Morchart Bishop Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street
Morchart Bishop
Crediton
Devon
EX17 6PJ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Devon
Date of inspection	26 April 2018
Date of last inspection	07 May 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 113457
Headteacher	Christopher Sargeant
Inspector's name and number	Patricia Morris 626

School context

Morchart Bishop is a smaller than average sized primary school with 116 children on roll. The school roll has increased over the last four years. The majority of children are of White British heritage although a small number speak English as a second language. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number supported by Pupil Premium. Attendance is above the national average.

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

- Distinctively Christian values are confidently articulated and deeply embedded, successfully impacting on children's excellent behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning.
- The dedication of the headteacher, supported by experienced and committed governors and staff, ensure an exceptionally clear vision is continually moving the school forward as a church school.
- The outstanding leadership of religious education is having a very positive impact, generating high quality teaching that encourages children to deepen their thinking.
- The excellent partnership with the church provides invaluable opportunities to engage and challenge children in new experiences.

Areas to improve

- Develop a shared understanding between all members of the school community of what spirituality means and involve children in plans to refurbish the outdoor spiritual garden to engage them in high quality opportunities for spiritual development.
- Extend the ethos group to involve children and parents so that there is a shared ownership by all members of the school community.

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

The school's Christian vision, 'Christianity is the foundation of all we do', is firmly underpinned by eight core Christian values, reflected in, and including, the acronym 'respect'. All members of the school community were fully consulted and involved in deciding values, generating a very strong sense of ownership. Values are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school and clearly supported by biblical quotes. Children confidently articulate and identify their importance saying, 'they help us to make better decisions and to look after each other'. They explain how they made a 'menu' for each value as a reminder of what they look like in action. There is a firm understanding that values are for life and not just used in school. Vibrant displays and banners around the school reflect values and children speak positively about the tree of values, which has responsibility at the top along with the message 'it starts with you' as an encouragement to take responsibility for their own actions. Values make a distinctive contribution to the Christian character of the school, enriching the environment and contributing to exemplary behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and excellent relationships within the school community. A considerable amount of work has been covered on spirituality and, although children are confident in explaining what it means to them, there is no shared understanding across the school, as yet. Children's individual interpretations include 'being filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'things that move me, like a really powerful speech'. A highly informative DVD has been produced by the religious education (RE) leader showing many varied opportunities to support spiritual development in the school and talking to children about their understanding of personal spirituality. Children are enthusiastic about their plans to refurbish the outdoor spiritual garden as an extension of their 'Forest School' ethos in celebrating God's creation. Religious education makes invaluable contributions to children's spiritual development by providing challenging questions to extend children's thinking and discussions that encourage deeper thinking and opinions. It consistently promotes Christian values and makes a significant contribution to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Children are fully aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. This is extremely well supported through the Devon 'Food for Thought' programme, enabling the school to develop strong links with a primary school in Uganda. Children are enthusiastic about a recent visit from the head of the school and talk animatedly about some artefacts brought as gifts, such as the football made from banana leaves, and of the ways in which they fund raise to support the school, such as the building of a new toilet block. Such experiences give children a sense of humility and respect for children who are less fortunate. There is a high degree of respect for other cultures and beliefs, which is promoted in many excellent ways including meeting visitors from other faiths and communities. These experiences are invaluable in supporting children's understanding of the wider world in which they live.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and is firmly rooted in Christian values and traditions. Planning of worship is extremely thorough and well organised, ensuring opportunities for children to reflect on values in Bible stories and identify them in their own lives. Children are extremely respectful in worship and appreciate opportunities to regularly plan and lead their own worship. They are fully engaged by the creative use of drama and skilful questioning produces an impressive depth of thought in children's answers. Prayer is an important part of worship and children say 'it is a way of building a better relationship with God'. Children are enthusiastic about prayer spaces in classrooms, which include well-used prayer boxes and prayer trees. They are animated when talking about innovative ideas such as writing forgiveness prayers on cellophane then placing them in water where they will be washed away as a symbol of God's forgiveness. Prayers are said regularly throughout the day, using a prayer dice at lunchtime and sharing prayers they have written at the end of the day. Children acknowledge the parent weekly prayer group who meet regularly to pray for them and their school. They are particularly grateful for the healing service in the church where they have the opportunity to nominate people or situations they would like church members to pray about. Such initiatives make a significant contribution to the very strong partnership between the school and local church. The vicar visits the school regularly and welcomes worship being held in the church, encouraging children to develop a sense of ownership. This was evidenced in Holy Week when children took responsibility for gospel readings and dramatizing the events leading up to Easter. The significant impact of this is clear in the inspiring way children speak of such experiences and their very good understanding of Christian festivals. The involvement of a trainee community and families worker also provides many enriching experiences through clubs and worship. For example, in the worship observed, children watched an effervescent tablet dissolve, powerfully comparing about how it can take time to forgive while the changing colour of the water was compared to how forgiveness often changes our feelings. Children's reactions affirmed the excellent contribution of worship to their spiritual development. Worship makes a significant contribution to children's developing understanding of the Trinity. Opportunities to promote this are highlighted in planning and children's comments about the Holy Spirit included, 'it is the happiness inside when we believe in God and Jesus' and 'it is like a wind that travels everywhere at the same time'. Monitoring of worship takes place in a variety of ways, including a very impressive worship journal kept by older children. This informs a comprehensive development plan that ensures worship has a clear purpose

and is constantly moving forward.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education has a very high profile within the life of the school. The RE leader is extremely knowledgeable and passionate about the subject. She has recently completed a course involving extensive research on teaching and learning in RE. This is having a significant impact on all aspects of RE in the school. The philosophy of expanding children's learning through enquiry and the exploration of ideas means that children are totally engaged in lessons and have the confidence to ask questions and learn through discussion. All children are challenged through big questions such as 'Is everything connected?' and 'What is love?' which develop more critical and deeper thinking. The introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' resources is making a positive contribution to teacher's increased subject knowledge and confidence, effecting very good progress and standards of attainment that are at least in line with national expectations and often higher. Lessons promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and there are excellent links with worship. For example, a national disaster, used as the basis for worship, was discussed in RE and inspired a powerful display of doves along a corridor with children's responses and prayers. Children have a secure understanding of many Christian festivals and make very good links between Christianity and other faiths. This is endorsed in a number of inspirational ways such as a termly display about a different faith with opportunities for children to handle artefacts and ask questions. This is extremely well supported by visitors from other faiths who spend time in classes, share their culture and talk about common values with Christianity, providing opportunities for deep and meaningful discussions to support children's understanding. Monitoring of RE is rigorous with high quality marking and feedback ensuring consistency in assessment. This leads to a clear development plan for further enriching learning experiences.

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

The dedication and commitment of the headteacher, extremely well supported by a committed team of staff and governors, is instrumental in providing exceptionally effective leadership. Leaders confidently articulate, live out and promote a vision based on distinctively Christian values. There is an excellent understanding of the impact of explicit Christian values on children's lives. Governors are fully informed and knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development in the school. This is further secured through regular visits and robust monitoring, leading to accurate and insightful self-evaluation. Governors are committed to continual and sustained school improvement and use their varied expertise effectively. The excellent relationship between governors and staff enable them to ask challenging questions, knowing they are working together for the good of the school. A successful ethos group was established, after the previous inspection, to monitor and evaluate the school's distinctive Christian character. After compiling and analysing a comprehensive questionnaire to evaluate all aspects of being a church school, the group have been instrumental in many initiatives, such as the introduction of the prayer spaces around the school. The group now needs to extend to involve children and parents so that there is a shared ownership by all members of the school community. Leadership in RE is outstanding and leads to highly effective practice. The excellent links with the church ensure the school is an integral part of the local community. The vicar fully supports the school and promotes joint activities that strengthen these partnerships. For example, running stalls at the summer fair and visiting the local residential home. Children have a good awareness of others who are not as fortunate as them and, as well as raising funds to support Children's Hospice South West and Christian Aid, they are energised when talking about a recent project that enabled them to explore business opportunities by taking part in a 'Dragon's Den' based on a Fair Trade Product. This empowered them to put forward plans to support charities that had personal meaning to them such as the Blue Cross and Cancer Research. Parents are extremely supportive and have a very positive view of the school. They feel welcome in school and particularly praise the many varied opportunities given to children through after school clubs such as hand bell ringing, a LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) club, which enables children to take exams in the performing arts, and a very well attended 'messy church' run by the vicar. Parents say 'children's confidence is nurtured here' and 'Christian values prepare them well for their future lives'. Collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report April 2018 Morchard Bishop Church of England VA Primary School Crediton Devon EX17 6PJ