

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Barrowford St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

Wheatley Lane Road, Barrowford, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 6QT

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	21 June 2018
Date of last inspection	November 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 119431
Headteacher	Michelle Wright
Inspector's name and number	Fiona Ashton 860

School context

Barrowford St Thomas' is a smaller than average voluntary aided Church of England primary school serving a semi-rural village on the outskirts of Nelson. The majority of pupils are White British, very few speak English as an additional language and a below average number are supported by pupil premium funding. Pupils, with the exception of those in reception are taught in four mixed age classes. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the time of the previous inspection but the chair of governors has held the position for a significant period of time.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barrowford St Thomas' as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Challenging, inspirational and deeply Christian leadership by the headteacher ensures that all members of the community are able to be academically and professionally successful while growing in their personal spirituality and social, moral and emotional wellbeing.
- The quality of relationships throughout the school and with the parish and the wider community bring respect, creativity and a sense of security to the pupils of St Thomas'
- The manner in which the person of Christ is at the centre of the community because of the quality of collective worship, the additional opportunities that pupils have to pray and the richness of the religious education (RE) curriculum.

Areas to improve

- Broaden the remit of the pupils' Ethos group so that it has an even greater influence and impact upon the Christian distinctiveness and spirituality of the school.
- Extend the development of the school grounds to facilitate to even greater effect pupils' reflection and prayer experiences.

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

The school motto, 'With God's love we grow' supports the community and ensures that the school's strongly held, and deeply embedded, Christian values impact upon the lives, actions and aspirations of all. The mission statement, extensively reviewed as an outcome of the previous inspection, is the driving force behind every aspect of the school's life. It is instantly apparent that this is a school community with Christ at its centre and which is focused on enabling the whole community to achieve its potential. All pupils make excellent academic progress at St Thomas' because they are supported in their learning and encouraged to be aspirational. Attendance is excellent and well above the national average. Pupils enjoy attending school and their behaviour and enthusiasm for learning reflect this.

Relationships are a palpable strength of the community. Governors, staff, parents and the pupils all speak of the school as a family that cares for and loves each other. Nurture groups and activities such as Happy Club support pupils when they most need it. Pupils in particular relate their friendships and behaviour to the example of Christ. A Key Stage 2 pupil explained that, 'I know that when I forgive, Jesus forgives and forgets.' Parents are delighted by the way that the school works with them to support their children. Pupils learn about and experience democracy because they are listened to and see that their voice has an impact. They speak with confidence about decisions that they have made and plans that they have.

St Thomas' tackles diversity with confidence. It has links with school and faith groups that are very different and treat the relationships as ones of mutual respect. This ensures that pupils have a rich understanding of different ways of life locally, nationally and internationally. Pupils recognise the privilege of learning and the diversity of the Christian church because they have very strong links with the Revival Church in Tanzania that supports the education of street children. Pupils are proud that they raise money and send exercise books to children they may never meet. They are similarly enthusiastic in their support for the children in the Bethany Orphanage. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural needs are met through an extensive range of curricular and extra-curricular activities that enrich their lives and broaden their experience. The school's Christian character successfully ensures that children have a sensitive understanding of and respect for, diversity both locally and internationally. This is achieved through their collective worship, learning in RE and support for charities. The contribution of RE to embedding and further developing the Christian character of the school is exceptional. It engages and inspires pupils. The school is privileged to have beautiful grounds and has begun using them for worship and reflection as well as for eco and other types of learning. However, the school has ambitious plans for outside reflection spaces that now need time to be fully developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is thoughtfully and thoroughly planned to reflect, not only the Christian values of the school, but to ensure that the whole community grows in its understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Church. It is invitational and inspiring. It leaves a lasting impression and enables those present to reflect upon their personal relationship with God. The weekly pattern of worship allows for the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the local incumbent and pupils to all share in planning worship. This reflects the liturgical calendar, the values of the school and when appropriate, current news. Pupils have a wonderful enthusiasm for worship. Members of the pupil ethos group are confident to lead and independently plan worship. For example, a Year 6 pupil planned a very impressive and memorable worship based upon the Last Supper. Parents and carers regularly attend the Friday Good News worship valuing it for its celebration of the pupils' achievements and the carefully chosen Christian message that the adults present can respond to. Pupils love worship because it is fun and memorable and makes sense to their daily lives. They see the benefits of prayer in their own lives and also the power of prayer to support them and others in times of need. All members of the community are constantly invited to deepen their relationship with God through reflection spaces in classrooms and prayer spaces around the building. Pupils particularly value the stone well in the school entrance where you can 'make your own special prayer'. Equally well used is the 'Thank you' tree, where pupils stop and pray for their own intentions. Free prayer is used with confidence but equally the community uses the Lord's Prayer, the Peace and the Grace regularly in collective worship. St Thomas' pupils are exceptionally aware of the breadth of the Anglican tradition. They experience it in their school worship and their very regular engagement with the local parish. Parish and school see themselves as extensions of each other. They worship together regularly and pray for each other constantly. The school shares parish worship for Education and Remembrance Sundays and Harvest Festival. Joining Sunday worship enhances pupils experience and understanding of Eucharist. At Harvest, the school gives to the parish and the parish gives to the charities that are being supported. They share as one community.

Worship is enhanced by whole school ethos days. The ethos group are integral to arranging these events. They work with adults to decide on the theme and activities. They are able to do this because their development as ethos leaders is nurtured and spiritually supported. Pupils replicate the excellent example that is modelled for them. They choose themes and activities so that they have meaning. For example, making origami doves because 'the dove is a holy bird' was understood in terms of Trinity, Pentecost and peace. Adults and pupils engage fully in reflective evaluation of worship. For example, following worship focussing on the parable of The Good Samaritan, a Key Stage 2 pupil commented 'Today I've learnt, don't just be kind to your normal friend; be kind to your neighbour. Evaluations are prominently displayed so that

they can be read by all.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Levels of achievement and engagement in RE are exceptional. They are at least equal to, and often better than in other core subjects in this high achieving school. Pupils' work is moderated internally and externally so that standards are secure. Those staff who don't teach RE understand the standards expected of pupils in RE because they attend professional development relevant to the subject and participate in work scrutinies. Pupils know what progress they are making in RE and how to move forward in their learning because their work is very regularly assessed and always includes a 'move on' point which pupils respond to. The leadership and teaching of RE is outstanding. Pupils are inspired by their learning. This is the more remarkable because they are taught in mixed year groups. Work is carefully differentiated to support and challenge. When learning in RE, pupils are immediately engaged and enthusiastic and see working carefully so that they get to the extension task as something to look forward to. Key Stage 1 pupils already appreciate that 'Even if we don't know, we have a go'. This is a reflection of the secure and positive learning environment that their teacher creates for them so that they thrive in their learning. Pupils are equally confident working collaboratively as they are working independently. Exciting RE extends pupils cultural and spiritual awareness. Art and music draw pupils into appreciating the faiths they learn about and their impact upon believers. Key Stage 2 pupils, reflecting upon a picture of Jesus' baptism engaged in thoughtful discussion about Trinity because they could make the link of Jesus the Son, the voice of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Their knowledge and understanding of the Bible and the person of Jesus is remarkable not only because they know the stories but because they understand their importance. Learning about Christian practices is given a sense of awe because the local vicar illustrates their learning through her explanations of the vessels and vestments of Christian worship.

The RE curriculum has an appropriate balance of learning about and from Christianity and other faiths. Pupils' understanding of other faiths is remarkable in its depth. They understand different beliefs and practices and appreciate and respect the culture and rights of people of different or no faith. A Key Stage 2 pupil explained it as 'You can't say Christians are better, other religions do other things'. Visitors from other faiths add to the excitement as well as the richness of pupils learning in RE. Pupils' retain their learning and can apply it to different contexts. They are effusive about their enjoyment of RE. Pupils repeated the phrases 'I love doing....' and 'I enjoy learning about...' and 'it's one of the best things about St Thomas's' in relation to their RE.

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

St Thomas' is a school where Christ and children are at the heart of the community. This is so because of the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the outstanding support and challenge that she receives from the governing body and staff.

Governors, staff, parents and the parish community are immensely proud of their association with the school and unrelenting in their pursuit of its continuing excellence. Governors are robust in their strategic role. They are concerned to ensure that they have the skills to do this effectively and participate in a range of local and national initiatives to ensure that they remain effective. They monitor the school's Christian distinctiveness thoroughly through the structure of the governing body and through direct observation of teaching, and worship. They share in the whole daily life of the school. They undertake Christian distinctiveness learning walks to ensure that they all well informed of the school's success as a church school. Governors ensure that those in leadership positions within the school community are practising Christians and staff commented that their personal faith grows through association with St Thomas'. Adults in the school successfully engage in a range of professional development opportunities that enhance their understanding of church schools and challenge them to be outstanding Christian educators. Governors are clear that under the leadership of the current headteacher, the Christian distinctiveness of the school has become embedded and the statutory requirements for RE and worship are well met. The headteacher's personal faith guides her so that she sees her work in St Thomas' as God's work. Staff appreciate the care that the school extends to them as well as to the pupils and their families. The school motto 'With God's love we grow' is seen by staff as encouraging reflective practice of their impact and the way that they apply themselves to their role. The school has an excellent track record of developing colleagues at all levels to find the roles that they are best suited to within the school and in developing Christian school leaders. This results in staff that are focused upon delivering the very best outcomes for pupils. Pupils throughout the school community respond to the trust that adults invest in them. They enjoy the range of leadership opportunities that they are offered and respect that they have a voice in the school community that is listened to and valued. Older pupils appreciate that with leadership comes responsibility and are proud to take on roles as mentors and buddies for the youngest members of the community. School councillors take pride in their fundraising and their role in deciding upon and supporting a variety of charities. A parent commented of St Thomas' 'I feel blessed that my children come here' another echoed this saying 'We couldn't ask any more for our children; everyone is celebrated for who they are.'

SIAMS report June 2018. Barrowford St Thomas' CE Primary School, Nelson, BB9 6QT