

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Boston St Thomas' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Wyberton Low Road, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 7RZ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Lincoln
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	N/A
Name of multi-academy trust	N/A
Date of inspection	20 March 2017
Date of last inspection	21 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled primary 120546
Interim Headteacher	Anne-Marie Strachan
Inspector's name and number	Janet McMurdo 529

School context

Boston St Thomas' CE VC Primary School is a larger than average primary school and is one of the largest in the area. It serves the local community, the wider Boston town area and neighbouring villages. The majority of the children on roll are White British. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of children whose first language is not English. At the time of the inspection the school had an interim headteacher in post as the previous executive headteacher left at the end of the Autumn Term. The school is in a hard federation with Wyberton Primary School.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Boston St Thomas' CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Deeply embedded Christian values inspire the school community and give rise to excellent behaviour and relationships throughout the school.
- The quality of children's work, both in books and on displays, clearly illustrate their love and understanding of religious education.
- Well-embedded links with the church support the clear Christian ethos of the school.
- The inclusion of children from other countries, through the role of language ambassadors enables new arrivals to quickly settle into the school.
- Children take many opportunities to reflect on situations and lead all present in spontaneous prayer.

Areas to improve

- As a key part of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) ensure that opportunities for children to experience awe and wonder as part of their developing spirituality are more clearly identified across the whole curriculum.
- Increase the opportunities for children to reflect on important events in their lives and create written responses which can be used in a variety of prayerful contexts.
- Provide regular opportunities for children to learn about the life of Jesus to improve their understanding of what they can learn from Him for their lives today.

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

St Thomas' Boston is a very strong unified church school where the Christian values of respect, compassion, resilience, fellowship and trust are key influencers in all of the decisions. A strong Christian ethos is unmistakable in all aspects of the school. As a result the behaviour of the children across the school is commendable, as evidenced both in lessons and in collective worship. The children demonstrate a very compassionate caring attitude and give each other the space and time to think and therefore to thrive. The link between children's behaviour and the school Christian values is obvious in how they interact with each other around school.

The children develop a good understanding of the religions they study and reflect on and express their thoughts about what this learning means to them. This is evidenced both in books and in the high quality displays around the school. Children interviewed could articulate how these experiences were often linked to Bible verses and taught them how to react appropriately when situations in their lives arise. In a year 6 RE lesson children were debating which Christian festival was the most important, Christmas or Easter. The quality of their considered responses, showing empathy and a good understanding of the festivals, was practical evidence of the work seen in books and on display as their routine practice. The high quality of the children's work, in a variety of contexts, is evidence to the richness of their learning in RE, though their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is less developed. They have also developed links with national and international organisations, to further develop their understanding and raise funds for Christians across the world.

The obvious love of their school by the children is evidenced in the levels of attendance which are above the national average. The school, through its Christian character, ensures that standards are improving year on year in English and maths. Attainment is also very strong in RE, showing results in line with those achieved in English. In promoting the school's Christian values, the school effectively prepares the pupils for the future and enables their understanding of diverse cultures and communities. Pupils regularly benefit from visits to and visitors from a variety of other faith communities.

Whilst there is evidence of SMSC in many aspects of school life, the children's understanding of spirituality is less well developed. Planned opportunities for awe and wonder across the curriculum have not yet been fully identified. The school's Christian commitment to inclusion is clearly evidenced in their current context. Strong evidence was presented on the inspection day to support a wide range of strategies being used to ensure all children can attend school and are successful when they are there. Key members of staff support children in a variety of contexts. A grandparent described this as 'going the extra mile, and then some'. The response of the leadership team, both in terms of resource deployment and working proactively, is evidence of the Christian love they show to all members of the school community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is an important part of the life of this school. Although the school meets in two key stage groups due to the size of the hall for the numbers of children. This essential start to the school day was described as being 'a key time to think' by one of the children. It regularly reinforces the importance and impact of Christian values on the life of the community. Members of the school community also refer to the key role played by the vicar and curate in supporting the school staff to develop the whole child rather than just their academic ability. The collective worships seen on the inspection day were evidence of the high level of engagement and participation by the whole school community. It was reported by the children to be typical of their usual worship experiences.

Pupils develop an understanding of different styles of worship through the leadership of all staff and leaders of the local Anglican church. Staff delivering the separate acts of worship work closely together to ensure they are similar but age appropriate and both provide many opportunities for children to plan and lead. As well as contributing to the pupils' spiritual, cultural and moral development worship also contributes to their social awareness.

Consequently, they engage enthusiastically in charitable projects and fundraising for both local and national charities. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to pray offered in collective worship and are confident to routinely lead spontaneous prayer. However, there are less opportunities for structured prayers to be prepared by the children, therefore the time to reflect fully on situations and gather their thoughts is less developed. The use of Anglican prayers, including the Lord's prayer is very evident, but the development of more structured prayer opportunities could strengthen the children's understanding of the Trinity as they consider how they pray to the Father, Son and Spirit. The children explain prayer as 'passing issues to God' and can clearly articulate the importance of this in their lives.

Worship themes include many elements of the Anglican liturgical calendar. This has ensured that children have a thorough understanding of the church year. Pupils are introduced to the important doctrines of the Christian faith. Bible quotes are routinely used to illustrate the Christian values and the themes explored in collective worship but not as much emphasis is placed on the life of Jesus Christ and what Christians learn from him today. A particular highlight of the school year for the children are the times they celebrate together in the local church. Key times in

the liturgical year are marked by services at the church and enjoyed by parents.

Links with RE enable teaching in worship about Christian values and the Bible to be reinforced. Worship is regularly monitored and evaluated by the Church School Council and adults, including governors and leads to ongoing developments.

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

The interim headteacher supports the leadership team to promote and live out their vision for the school to nurture and support every individual as a child of God. This is securely rooted in Christian values and biblical teaching and is shared by others in the school community. They model a distributed leadership structure, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities. Since the team members are clearly committed to the same vision, all are able to confidently promote the Christian values. The governing body successfully supports and challenges the leadership team to consolidate and continue to develop the school's Christian values. The role of the incumbent in supporting the leadership team to uphold promote the Christian values of the school is well evidenced by all stakeholders. He, or a member of his team, is a weekly visitor to the school, planning, supporting and monitoring many aspects of the church school, as well as providing emotional and spiritual support as necessary.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate, insightful and shows commitment to the development of all areas of the school. The whole school community is involved in evaluating its work which leads to consistent improvement. The school development plan includes RE and worship and confirms the high profile and perceived importance of these areas of the school. All areas for development identified in the last inspection have been strengthened through clear incisive action.

One of the senior leaders is responsible for RE and collective worship, thus giving status to these important elements of school life. Planning in collective worship is thorough, collaborative and leads to highly effective practice. The school environment and displays demonstrate the high priority and status of RE across the school. This is reinforced by the RE recording in the children's books.

The work of the children's Church School Council has a high impact on the monitoring, evaluation and review processes of the school. They recently took responsibility for a behaviour learning walk and an evaluation of reflection spaces. For both of these activities they were responsible for feeding back to the staff their findings and suggesting changes.

The Christian vision makes a very positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour in this very popular church school. The school operates as part of a hard federation and through this staff development is coordinated to ensure both individuals and the whole school are supported to reach their potential. This partnership has also resulted in significant professional development opportunities across the schools. Significant commitment to working with the diocese has ensured the development of the church school has been sustained.

Parents are delighted that the values, which are the focus for worship, are embraced and understood by the children so they are able to discuss them at home. This means they are able to support and reinforce them. Church services are also publicised through the school newsletter so that families are kept well informed of local Christian activities. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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