



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bilston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Albany Crescent
Bilston
WV14 0HU

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Wolverhampton

Dates of inspection: 5 March 2015

Date of last inspection: February 2010

School's unique reference number: 130305

Headteacher: Gary Gentle

Inspector's name and number: Susan Taylor 688

School context

Bilston Church of England VC Primary School is a rapidly expanding school with currently 262 pupils. The school is part of the local authority expansion program which will see the school move from one form to two form entry. The school caters for pupils from many ethnic groups. Inward mobility is high with a number of children joining the school with little or no English. The number of pupils in receipt of pupil premium is well-above the national average. There have been a number of staff changes during the last two years. The incumbent of St Leonard's Church is new to the post since the previous inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bilston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Bilston CE(C) Primary School is an effective Christian school where:-

- Diversity and difference is celebrated and all children are valued as individuals.
- Pupils behave well and show respect to each another.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the pupils is good due to extensive range of opportunities planned and offered by the school.

Areas to improve

- The school's core Christian values to be more clearly defined.
- Children to have a greater understanding of the Trinity as a core Christian belief.
- The impact of worship to be more formally monitored by foundation governors.

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

The school's Christian character has a very significant impact upon pupil relationships as is reflected in the way they support and value each other. Pupils have a high degree of understanding and respect for diversity both within the school and the local community and they feel they are "one big family". A deep understanding of this was expressed by a child who said "we are all the same in God's eyes". The school develops understanding of faith communities by a range of activities, including being a pioneering school in the Wolverhampton Inter-faith Network group. Behaviour is a strength of the school, as strategies are based on the values of love and respect. Children say they feel safe, happy and very well supported in school and this helps them to make progress in their learning. The school has had some issues with attainment but standards are now improving. Progress is higher than national expected levels, with all children now making expected progress and a significant number making more than expected. So the school is providing for the academic needs of the pupils. Much of this accelerated progress has been achieved by the care and targeted support staff give to individuals and groups of pupils and the support given to families. Religious education (RE) is well planned by an enthusiastic leader. There are a broad range of learning activities and these experiences make positive contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The school has a number of values and mottos displayed around the school. However, pupils and other stakeholders are not clear as to the school's core values and how they relate to the teachings of Jesus. The revised curriculum clearly identifies opportunities for SMSC development and these opportunities are used fully to increase pupils' understanding of the wider world. This has an impact on their personal development, academic achievement and enjoyment of school. Active links exist with a school in Kenya and this has given pupils and parents an awareness of the Christian faith as a worldwide religion and how Christianity influences the lives of people in all parts of the world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Pupils of all faiths value and enjoy daily worship time together, so that pupil attitudes and relationships are fostered. They listen attentively and sing enthusiastically, the music group enhancing the atmosphere. As well as being led by staff collective worship is regularly led by the minister of St Leonard's Church and youth pastor of Bilston Pentecostal Church and occasionally by governors and other visitors. This range of worship leaders give pupils an understanding of different expressions of the Christian faith. The youth leader from the Pentecostal Church has formed a worship group who have been involved in the planning and delivery of worship and the group are enthusiastic to do more. The impact of collective worship on developing pupils' spirituality and their knowledge and understanding of the life of Jesus is not so evident. Although the school has a worship table its position means that some of its value is lost, as are opportunities for personal reflection. Pupils lack an understanding of the significance of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and ways to develop this understanding, appropriate to the age of the children is an area for development. A candle is sometimes lit during worship and some pupils know that this ritual is to do with the core Christian belief in Jesus as the light of the world. Worship is planned on weekly themes based upon Christian values and beliefs as well as social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL). These clearly develop pupils' social and moral education. The Lord's Prayer is said confidently by all children and the prayer tree gives pupils an opportunity to pray and reflect, as do reflection areas in all classrooms. All classes have written their own end of day prayer. However, responses from pupils show inconsistencies with the use of reflection area as well as prayers at the end of the day and so some opportunities for developing pupils' spiritually and ensuring that prayer is central to the life of the school are lost. Pupils visit St Leonard's Church for Harvest, Christmas and Easter celebrations as well as part of the RE curriculum. Through this and open door events at the St Peter's Church and Lichfield Cathedral pupils have a developing awareness of Anglican traditions and positive attitudes to the Church. Although Foundation

governors are involved in the life of the school, they do not formally monitor and evaluate the impact of worship. Evidence from such a process would highlight pupils' understanding of core Christian beliefs and Biblical teaching, so to direct future action planning.

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

The school is led by a Headteacher whose personal Christian faith influences his leadership of the school and the opportunities and outcomes of the pupils. The staff are a hardworking united team who support the Christian vision of the school and strive to provide a good all-round education for the pupils. Pupils are actively encouraged to put Christian values into practice through a wide range of charity and community events, such as the current 'food mountain', a Lent initiative supported by local churches. The elected school council are proactive in school development and this gives pupils a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for aspects of their school life. An example of this is the development of the outdoor area where children respect the equipment, play together well and enjoy the "grass and dinosaur". Foundation governors are involved in the life of the school and are a welcome support to the headteacher and staff, who they support both practically and prayerfully. There is a system in place for foundation governors to keep the full governing body informed about the Christian distinctiveness of the school, so that all governors can take responsibility for developments. The school has strong links with St Leonard's Church as well as Bilston Pentecostal Church. The minister and youth pastor of the churches are regularly in the school and involved in many activities. Pupils of all faiths relate well to them and this enhances the school's Christian effectiveness in reaching out to all families. Through these links many pupils and parents have participated in the Churches Together event "Hope in the Park" and children attend the Pentecostal Church Sunday School that is held on the school premises. The school is working hard to increase parent participation in their child's education as well as supporting parents as individuals; investing a great deal of time and resources. As a result of working with families parental aspirations have been raised and this has impacted upon pupil outcomes and attendance. So as to increase attendance and punctuality a mini-bus is available to pick-up and drop-off some children. A 'before and after' school club is also available, as well as a wide-range of extra-curricular activities. These are valued by parents. Parents feel that the school is very caring, teachers supportive and pupils well-mannered. A parent shared that she had not originally wanted her child at Bilston, but now thinks that this was "the best thing that could have happened".

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