



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Benedict Biscop Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Road
Wombourne
Staffordshire, WV5 9DZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Satisfactory

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire

Dates of inspection: 16th June 2016

Date of last inspection: 11th July 2011

School's unique reference number:

Headteacher: Helen George

Inspector's name and number: Helen Gilbert 633

School context

St Benedict Bishop is a one-form entry voluntary controlled primary school that serves a semi-rural area in the parish of Wombourne. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage and the proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding or with special needs or disability are both well below the national average. The school has very strong links with St Benedict Biscop church. A new head teacher came to the school in September 2015. Within two weeks, OFSTED placed the school in special measures. Since then there have been some changes in staffing and three new members have been appointed to the governing body. Governors are exploring future academy arrangements.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Benedict Biscop as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The exceptionally strong and focused leadership of the head teacher, which has empowered staff and governors to lead far more effectively in their respective areas of responsibility.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school's distinctive Christian values of friendship, courage, hope, forgiveness, trust and respect and seek to live these out in school.
- Lively and engaging worship gives pupils a good understanding of the teachings of Jesus and has strong influence on their attitudes, behaviour and relationships.
- Religious Education has a high profile in the school, engages pupils and is giving pupils a good understanding of the Christian faith.

Areas to improve

- Improve the progress made and standards achieved by all groups of learners through a continued focus on improving the quality of teaching and assessment consistently throughout the school so that all pupils make rapid progress and outcomes become good.
- Introduce more formalised systems for monitoring the impact of collective worship that involve pupils and governors alongside staff.
- Enhance pupils' understanding of other faith traditions by including visits to a range of places of worship in the Religious Education Curriculum.

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

The school's Christian character is evident throughout the school building through displays, posters and artefacts. These all reinforce the school's distinctive Christian values of friendship, courage, hope, forgiveness, trust and respect, which are explored fully through the worship themes for each half term. Parents appreciate that they have had the opportunity to help formulate these values and believe they give their children a firm foundation for life. Pupils talk readily about them and are able to link them to stories from the Bible, saying that they influence their attitudes, behaviour and relationships. They feel safe and place great trust in the adults in the school. As a result the majority of pupils are well behaved and say that any disputes are quickly resolved. They feel secure in the knowledge that the head teacher is available to listen to them and consider their ideas. A significant number of parents have chosen the school because of its Christian foundation and value the active engagement pupils have with the church. They all say that the school supports their children very well. They believe that under the leadership of the new head teacher the school is improving rapidly. The school's Christian foundation is articulated very well to new parents who understand the importance of worship in the life of the school and the significance of the relationship with the parish church. Prayer has an important place in the school day and has recently been given a much higher profile in the classrooms as well as during collective worship. Pupils appreciate the areas set aside for quiet reflection both in their rooms and outside in the Peace Garden. They can talk about the different elements of prayer, praise and thanksgiving, asking for help, praying for others and asking for forgiveness, and value the opportunities to write their own prayers. Religious Education is now making a good contribution to the distinctive Christian character of the school and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Standards in this subject are rising and pupils are making better progress. They are developing their understanding about a number of world faiths but say they would appreciate opportunities to visit other places of worship. As a result of RE, Worship and the strong relationship with the church, pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and practices. Church members run Open Door in the church and also ARK, a Christian Club for the children. Older pupils are able to demonstrate a good understanding of the significance of the Communion Service for Christians and some Year 6 pupils attend confirmation classes. Pupils of all ages can associate their numerous fundraising efforts to the teaching of Jesus to care for others. Pupils are not yet all achieving the standards expected of them in English and Maths but the quality of teaching is improving and the percentage of pupils working at or above age-related expectations is rising.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is highly valued by staff, pupils and governors, and pupils of all ages participate with obvious enjoyment. The school has responded to feedback from pupils about the songs used and they now sing some very lively action-based songs which link well to overall themes and stories. The head teacher and rector meet regularly to plan worship together. This ensures that the events of the church calendar are central to the plan for the year and that each week the different acts of worship complement each other. As a result pupils have a good understanding of Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, the Ascension and Pentecost as well as an awareness of the liturgical colours used throughout the year. Each half term there is a focus on one of the school's Christian values and pupils can link these to both the old and new testament stories. Pupils can

recall a good range of bible stories and are able to describe the content of these with some detail and also discuss how they influence their beliefs about themselves and their relationships and attitudes to each other. This has a very positive impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. They understand Jesus' teaching about forgiveness and can explain how they try to live this out in school. One child said, '*worship makes me less selfish and helps me to think more about others.*' There is a strong emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ as well as God the Father and the Holy Spirit and as a result pupils of all ages have a good appreciation of the Holy Trinity. Pupils enjoy worship with different worship leaders and also a range of contexts, as a whole school, in phase groups, in their classrooms and in the parish church. The head teacher has provided a very clear framework for acts of worship to ensure that the main elements are consistently included. There is a clear welcome to worship, candles are lit and there is time and space for singing, stories and illustrations, prayer and reflection. Prayer has a high profile during worship and in the classrooms. At the start of each half term pupils are invited to write prayers associated with the focus value and these are then placed on the prayer tree and used during worship throughout that half term. There are also prayer boxes in the classrooms in which pupils place any personal concerns or prayer requests. The evaluation of the impact of worship for pupils is still at a fairly informal stage and this is an area for development.

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

In September 2015 leadership at the school was graded inadequate by OFSTED. Eight months later, in May 2016 Her Majesty's Inspectors judged that '*the school's leadership has improved considerably*' and praised the pace at which leaders are driving improvements forwards. The head teacher has already demonstrated exceptional focus and determination to build a confident team, empower staff and release their potential. Her determination is underpinned by a strong belief that the Christian character of the school must be central to all that the school does and must motivate all decisions. This has been reflected in the way in which underperformance has been dealt with in the school. She is strongly supported by the school's leadership team who are owning their responsibility for strategically and rapidly bringing about improvement. Staff, governors, parents and pupils all report that the school has improved significantly during this time and attribute many of the changes to the new head teacher and the way in which she has empowered the whole team to lead effectively in their respective areas of responsibility. Parents report that communication is much improved and are confident that the school is '*moving in the right direction.*' Children report that the new head teacher is '*never too busy*' to listen to them and they believe that their views are now being taken far more seriously. Governors have always been very supportive of the school but in the past were not sufficiently informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses and were not adequately involved in monitoring the school's performance. In October last year they carried out an audit on their own skills and have appointed new governors to bring additional experience and expertise. They are now receiving regular feedback and information from the head teacher and subject leaders and as a result have the confidence to ask searching questions that offer challenge as well as support. OFSTED judged leadership of Early Years to be good. The Early Years team is well led and members work together very effectively, share ideas with other practitioners and reflect on practice so that they may continue to improve. The leadership of RE has improved significantly because the head teacher has ensured that the very capable subject leader has sufficient time to develop the curriculum, support other staff with planning, and begin to monitor standards with the same rigour as is expected for Maths and English. This has already impacted on the quality of teaching. The new head teacher has strengthened the relationship with the diocese and is working closely with the local authority. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. The school council believe that they are taken seriously and are having a greater influence on decisions, for example in the re-introduction of a film night. The Collective Worship and Religious Education team (CREW) has recently been introduced in order that pupils may have a greater influence in shaping both Collective Worship and RE teaching in the school. This is in the early stages of

development. Other opportunities for pupils include the worship helpers, class monitors, telephone monitors, buddies and fruit monitors.

SIAS report St Benedict Biscop Church of England VC Primary School, Staffordshire, WV5 9DZ,
June 2016