

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Belmont Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Buckinghamshire Road Durham DH1 2QP	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Durham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Durham County Council
Date of inspection	24 th November 2016
Date of last inspection	8 th December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled 114227
Headteacher	Kirsty Harrison Brown
Inspector's name and number	Valerie Hall 859

School context

Belmont Church of England primary school has undergone significant changes since January 2015. It is the result of the amalgamation of two schools, Belmont Infant school and Belmont Church of England Junior school. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2016 and there have been changes in governance. The current chair of governors is very recently appointed. The numbers of children eligible for pupil premium grant are below national averages and the numbers of children with special educational needs are below national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Belmont Church Of England Voluntary Controlled Primary school as a Church of England school are good

- In worship and in its daily life the message that 'We are one Belmont family' shines through.
- Love and respect underpin the life and work of this school. It is evident in the environment and in discussion with all stakeholders. It reflects the love God has for everyone and is understood by the wider community.
- The school recently introduced its Rainbow Promise which sets out a clearly stated set of Christian values.
- The school has managed the successful amalgamation of a non-church school and a church school in a short space of time leading to a clear Christian ethos which can be readily articulated by both communities.
- Strong relationships, based in clearly stated Christian values are evident through the school.
- The school is above the national average for all outcomes at the end of foundation stage and in key stage one and two in 2016. Attendance is good and above the national average.

Areas to improve

- Clarify the contribution of RE to the overall success of the school as a church school and develop a strong action plan which will improve the contribution of RE to the Christian ethos of the school.
- Establish a formal structure for governors to fully evaluate and develop the school as a church school.
- Increase opportunities for children to plan and lead worship.

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

There are a clearly stated set of values evident in this newly amalgamated school. The Rainbow Promise, introduced in September 2016, exemplifies what the values are and they are used as the basis for worship planning so that over time they will be taught thoroughly. Parents talk of how they affect children's decision making outside school. The value of love is clearly stated by senior leaders and has assisted with challenging decision making in recent times.

Lesson observation showed that values are linked to spiritual, moral and social learning. This was seen in an English lesson and children could clearly be seen to use values to support each other. Reflection areas around school mean that children have the opportunity to explore their own spirituality. This is a new development for children in foundation stage and some of their teachers, but was equally evident and children could talk with enthusiasm about reflection. Adults and older children talk about the link between respect, which is a core value, and good behaviour.

Respect for other cultures and why it is important to understand other faiths is also made clear in displays and work in RE books. Leaders understand why this is important in a school in a largely mono cultural community. A newly appointed RE co-ordinator has made a good start in understanding her subject but has to develop an action plan.

Achievement is good and above national averages in all subjects. Governors are aware that there are some gaps between the attainment of some groups and have clear plans to use data to improve the school's performance. The provision of Early Birds breakfast club to support and nurture some pupils, promotes independence and mutual support as well as academic support. It is evidence of the school's Christian ethos and love in action, with a clear understanding of the importance of academic achievement for all. More experienced governors understand the school well and go to great lengths to ensure the values of school are promoted. One governor has organised interesting trips and visits for the children to ensure they have exciting experiences about the wider world in which they live and grow. They have visited the Houses of Parliament and represented their school well in the wider community. The Seedlings children's group had been discussing how they could help others and suggested to the vicar that they could help people in the parish. Children have continued this work independently as they found it so rewarding.

The former chair of governors spoke about the Christian journey of the school. She described some of the challenges involved in the amalgamation and how the personal faith of the current head teacher and senior leaders helped lead the school in difficult times. One particular change was the introduction of a nursery class in September 2016 into the amalgamated primary school. This is now up and running and making use of an area in school that was previously used as reception class. It enhances the education of the children and provides support to families. The early years curriculum is based on the same Christian values that are clearly expressed in the rest of the school. Early years now operates as a cohesive and successful key stage and underpins the good work in Key Stage 1.

Children are loved and nurtured in early years and there were clear examples of the care of those who are more vulnerable. Parents of children of all ages spoke movingly about how they have gained support as a result of the Christian value of love in school, at time when there was personal tragedy. Christian values are rapidly having a noticeable impact on the life of this school and its community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

There is well-planned and thought out collective worship based on a clearly stated set of Christian values. There are many opportunities for children to reflect and utilise private prayer in classrooms and shared areas and there is strong evidence of its development in Key Stage 1 and foundation stage. An act of collective worship was observed in Key Stage 1 and was highly engaging. It was based in biblical teaching and children showed huge amounts of enthusiasm for the story and worship elements. The use of three candles to signify ourselves, our Belmont family and the world remind children of the importance of symbols. This is a development that is beginning to resonate with children and adults. It places worship at the heart of everything the school does.

During an act of collective worship in Key Stage 2 it was obvious that the children enjoy quiet reflection at the beginning. One child said that she particularly enjoyed it when she could find a quiet place in her mind to begin to worship. The children were calm and reflective throughout. Children wrote and led prayer at the end of this worship. However, children do not regularly plan and lead entire acts of worship. Planning contains clear evidence that there are biblical references which help the children develop their spirituality. It is based on the

Anglican church calendar and weekly planning shows how values are developed. This leads to a cohesive and coherent worship plan which links to the wider curriculum and enhances children's experiences.

Work with adults in the local community as a result of Seedlings discussion demonstrate that children are reflective and recognise very well the links between spirituality, worship and service. Liturgical colours are displayed in the school hall and the effective display helps children focus during acts of worship. The display about the school's new Rainbow Promise, based on the story of Noah's ark, cements the link between worship and values. There is growing awareness of the centrality of Jesus in worship and in the life of school and children are beginning to show this in RE work and in discussion.

Children showed good knowledge of the parables and how they can contribute to an understanding of modern life. They could equate the story of the Good Samaritan to stories of prejudice and judgement. One child could say that 'you should never judge a book by its cover' in reference to the story.

Although adults speak with enthusiasm about the impact of collective worship on children, there are limited opportunities for them to participate in worship for themselves. There is prayer at the start of some meetings but it is not yet fully embedded as an opportunity for adults. However, they say they would welcome it.

Governors can talk about worship as they have attended regularly and can comment about its quality and impact on children, however they do not yet evaluate it systematically. Children however, evaluate worship and speak about it with enthusiasm. There are not yet any opportunities for teachers to lead worship in class groups. There has been some professional development in order to help teachers develop worship skills but they only lead whole school worship at present

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

Leadership of the church school is outstanding because it has clear purpose, drive and ambition, rooted in the clearly held Christian values of the leadership team. The newly appointed head teacher has made several significant changes that are taking the school Christian ethos forward at a very rapid pace. The leadership team tell a compelling story about the many developments that have taken place but have prioritised strong Christian relationships as being at the heart of all they do.

Standards are above national levels in all subjects and the school understands why there are gaps between some groups. It has robust plans to ensure children attain as well as they should. There is detailed and effective strategic planning by the headteacher and her leadership team for the success of the school as a church school. Governors are not yet fully involved in evaluation but can speak convincingly about the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. Buildings have been updated and refurbished to show the families in the community that the school is now a much loved place and that what happens there matters to the lives of children. There is no distinction between the two schools, they are now clearly one, as described by the statement 'we are one Belmont family'.

Teachers have an aspect of church school leadership embedded in their performance management targets. There are links with other church schools to promote strong church school leadership. Discussion with staff indicated that this was a welcome development and was assisting everyone to understand their role in the future of the school. Parents respect for the school, the head teacher and the leadership team are strong. They speak about their accessibility and support in times of difficulty. Leaders' planning for those families who need more care and attention is scrupulous. Links with the visually impaired service, who utilise part of the school premises mean that children have developed compassion for others that is highly moving to witness. The worship leader is the head teacher who has a clear view of the worship needs of school. As a result worship is inspirational and inclusive. Children spoke convincingly about the impact it had on them. They evaluate worship thoroughly which leads to improvements.

The RE lead is also newly appointed and working on developing an action plan. She has completed an audit of RE, which is thorough and identifies the needs of the school in developing the subject across all key stages. Marking is robust and leads to clear improvements. There are strong partnerships with the Diocese who have assisted with self-evaluation and also the local church and other church schools in the area. School leaders clearly see themselves as part of wider Anglican community and this is having noticeable and rapid positive impact. School arrangements meet the statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education.