

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Branscombe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	
Branscombe Seaton Devon EX12 3DA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Devon
Date of inspection	3 November 2017
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary voluntary controlled 113348
Executive headteacher	Katie Gray
Inspector's name and number	Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Branscombe is a smaller than average size primary school with 27 children on roll. They are arranged into two class groups. The majority of children are from a White British heritage and a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. Pupil mobility is high. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school is part of The Jubilee Federation of Schools together with two other church primary schools. The federation is led by an executive headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Branscombe CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership of the school as a Christian community by the executive headteacher, strongly supported by the fully committed leadership team, staff and governors, ensures that Christian values underpin all the school's work with children.
- Christian values, particularly love, are at the centre of the school's ethos and are lived out in the respectful and caring relationships throughout the school community.
- Collective worship is inspirational and successfully encourages children and adults to reflect on a range of spiritual questions which they apply to their own learning and living.

Areas to improve

Enable children to respond to the existing high quality of spiritual experiences in even greater depth by:

- Equipping children with the skills to enable them to develop their ability to reflect.
- Develop the children's ability to ask their own deep questions of meaning and purpose.

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

Love is at the heart of the school's vision and binds together all members of the school community in an inclusive environment but which has a strong sense of belonging as a Christian school. This notion of love is interpreted through explicit Christian teaching which underpins the everyday life of the school. Indeed, it has its origins in verses from the Bible. This vision directly reflects the school's aims to encourage children and adults to show kindness, compassion and gentleness towards others and learn how to forgive gracefully. These values make a strong contribution to the ethos which is reflected in the stimulating learning environment and high quality of relationships that enable all groups of children to make good progress, relative to their starting points and therefore achieve well in their learning. A key aspect of the successful impact of the school's Christian vision is the extent to which links made between explicitly Christian values, the school aims, interpreted through the 'Branscombe waves' which support behaviour and learning, and an understanding of spirituality together create a holistic approach to the development of the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development are an integral aspect of learning. Children have an excellent appreciation of these connections and articulate their thoughts and ideas about the school's vision with considerable insight. The school has made exceptional progress since the previous inspection in developing their understanding of spirituality. There is a clear definition of what spirituality means to the school community and there are excellent opportunities for children to explore what it means to be themselves, their relationships with others, an appreciation of the beauty around them and a developing ability to explore deeper questions of meaning purpose. Opportunities for children to explore these four concepts arise naturally through their learning and, because teachers have a clear awareness of them, do not need to be specifically planned in the curriculum. Staff take particular care to listen to the children's responses which are captured in journals that show how children are increasingly developing a language through which they explore their personal spirituality. All of this is at a very high level yet, children are not fully using their potential to formulate and reflect on questions that they themselves have generated and thereby deepen the quality of their responses at an even greater level. Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to the children's developing spirituality by exploring concepts through the school's values. The ongoing, and successful, introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource is making a positive difference to the quality of teaching and learning of RE by raising expectations of the depth of knowledge that children use to understand concepts such as Creation. Children respond well to this with positive attitudes towards learning about a range of world faiths. They show tolerance and respect for the faiths they learn about understanding that everyone, regardless of who they are, should be treated with dignity. This makes an excellent contribution to their personal, social and health education (PSHE) as well as promoting British values. Children show a high level of care for others both within the school community and beyond. This is reflected in long standing charity work supporting children in Britain and around the world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

A number of developments in collective worship since the previous inspection have come together and made a significant impact on the quality of worship and the difference it makes to the lives of children. For example, providing a dedicated space, the 'Worship Room', has raised the profile of worship and allowed greater continuity in how themes are delivered. It has also created a place for permanent displays about elements of worship such as the Trinity, prayer, spirituality and Christian values. Moreover, worship is outstanding because of the impact of worship themes over time in giving children a thorough appreciation of a wide range of values that impact on their spiritual and moral development which, when taken together, give them an understanding of the Christian interpretation of love that lies at the heart of the school's vision. When describing their school, children explain how acts of worship are key elements of what makes it a distinctive church school through learning about Jesus and saying prayers which are essential parts of that. Children talk about worship with a very positive attitude and explain how what they learn helps them to be 'better people'. Worship is thoroughly planned and focusses on exploring different aspects of values all of which are related to biblical teaching. These plans are regularly reviewed and the effectiveness of the messages given is constantly being appraised. Children have excellent opportunities to contribute to this feedback and their views have been taken into account when identifying further improvements. For example, the school identified that children were not secure in their appreciation of the Holy Spirit so introduced a weekly worship based on developing their understanding of the Trinity. An opening prayer now refers to each part of the Trinity and children are confident to give their own interpretation of what this means to them. The introduction of prayer buddies is helping children to become more confident to share their own prayers. Children have a secure grasp of the purpose of prayers saying that it is a time to talk to God who listens to everyone's prayers, regardless of who they are, because 'He made everyone equally'. The school has successfully introduced a regular celebration of Eucharist since the previous inspection. A special 'child friendly' version has been devised and both children and adults talk positively about it. Children have regular opportunities to plan and lead collective worship and there is an effective method of monitoring its impact through meetings with children and by their written responses.

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

The executive headteacher, very ably supported by other senior leaders, has ensured that the school's Christian distinctiveness has continued to grow since the previous inspection. The areas to improve from the previous report have been fully addressed with the headteacher, and her team, carefully considering how best to implement changes and doing so with integrity. For example, the staff have worked closely with the vicar to carefully consider how best to approach the development of children's spirituality. As a result, there is not only a clearer understanding of what it means, but a recognition, that because it is precious to each child and adult, it needs to be treated with great sensitivity. There is also a stronger understanding that love is central to the vision and this is clearly articulated by all members of the school community. The headteacher is committed to the continual promotion of the Christian ethos and fully supports her RE leader in implementing new initiatives such as the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. The current school development plan includes priorities for further improvement of the Christian ethos and actions to implement them are thorough. Progress towards achieving these actions is regularly reviewed and governors are fully informed of their impact. Governors themselves undertake learning walks to monitor the Christian ethos which then forms a regular item at full governing body meetings. This monitoring is further enhanced through the valuable contribution of the children's ethos team who meet regularly with the other schools in the federation to explore Christian distinctiveness. Together, all of these monitoring activities give leaders a very clear grasp of the school's strength as a church school and, through accurate evaluation, identify challenging areas for further improvement. The introduction of the 'Good Samaritan's Award' is an excellent example of how the school is continually making links between its Christian ethos and curriculum areas such as PSHCE. The vicar makes an important contribution to the life of the school through her support of worship and governorship. She has also helped to steer the successful introduction of the celebration of Eucharist. Links with the church are strong and mutually beneficial. The church funds a family and children's worker who works in the school each week running a lunchtime club which is open to all and supported by church members. The church is regularly used to celebrate some major Christian festivals which are popular with parents and members of the village and church community. Children regard the church as an integral part of the life of the school. The school engages very well with the wider church through its involvement in events such as the 'Three Trees Project', which helped children have a better understanding of the Easter story, and involvement in the national 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer project. Parents say that the school's approach to its Christian vision is very inclusive and gives their children opportunities to talk about faith and belief in an environment where they share their views openly knowing they will be listened to with respect. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report November 2017 Branscombe CE VC Primary School Seaton EX12 3DA