

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bilbrook Church of England Voluntary Controlled Middle School	
Bilbrook Road, Bilbrook, Staffordshire WV8 1EU	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Staffordshire
Name of federation	Codsall High Federation of Schools
Date of inspection	25 May 2017
Date of last inspection	12 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Middle School 124453
Executive Principal / Head of School	Alun Harding / Elaine Noble
Inspector's name and number	Revd Huw D Bishop 344

School context

Bilbrook Middle School has 140 pupils and is at the heart of this village community. The parish church is close and pupils worship there for seasonal festivals. The school is part of Codsall High Federation of Schools. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds with a small number representing other cultures. Since the last inspection, the incumbent, chair of governors and the executive principal of the federation have changed. The most recent OFSTED inspection in 2016 judged the school to require improvement, but leadership and management and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils were good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bilbrook Middle School as a Church of England school are good

- Effective leadership by the executive principal, head of school and senior team which is instrumental in embedding explicit values which reflect the school's distinctive Christian vision.
- The commitment of staff, parents and the local community towards the school's caring and inclusive ethos, based on Christian values.
- The supportive environment in which all pupils learn and behave well, using Christian values to address strategies to show forgiveness and compassion in their relationships with each other.
- The exemplary and effective partnership with the parish church which nurtures a clear understanding of Anglican identity and practice by the school community.

Areas to improve

- Engage all governors, including the wider federation, in the process of implementing rigorous, robust and formal systems to establish a more effective and consistent monitoring schedule for church school development.
- Through the development of a worship group, increase the role of pupils in the planning, leading, and evaluation of worship throughout the school to support the development of their personal spirituality.
- Align the new leadership in religious education (RE) alongside the 'Understanding of Christianity' project to make RE even more relevant to pupils, increasing the impact of spirituality across the curriculum.

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

The school's mission statement is clear in 'letting your light shine' (Matthew 5.16) through the Christian expression of values such as respect, forgiveness and care. This is seen in the quality of relationships in school and partnerships within the local community. Christian values are openly expressed and impact well on pupils' progress and achievement through effective teaching, particularly in religious education which pupils say they enjoy. This can be seen through relationships, good behaviour and systems that are having an impact on improving standards. Pupils achieve well in school, with current outcomes above the national averages. Christian values and particularly the importance of truth, respect and tolerance through inclusivity, is having a very positive impact on the character of the school and the spiritual development of pupils.

The school has been through a period of transition and transformation since the last inspection and is effective as it explores how it can express and embody even further its distinctive Christian character. The school is working very hard to embed these values across the curriculum and pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy expressing their views and opinions through questions and surveys. The school has also re-structured the leadership of religious education and the scheme of work follows the agreed syllabus of the local authority and the diocese. Parents, too, say that they feel part of the school's family community and this encourages them to be proactive with school. Pupils' efforts are constantly acknowledged and celebrated and, as a result, pupils want to be in school. This results in very high levels of attendance and punctuality. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning are good because they enjoy and appreciate all the learning experiences they are given. Pupils enjoy this broad curriculum which is creative and interactive with elements of spirituality weaving across subject boundaries making learning wholesome and relevant. This is enriched by attractive displays and classroom areas which link subject topics to Christian values through quotations from the Bible and the inspiring words of famous world leaders. This helps to widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world and the way special people have influenced its direction. Christian signs and symbols around the building also reinforce the school's distinctiveness and support pupils' spiritual awareness.

The school has a strong commitment to Christian stewardship and supports a range of charities, raising over £1000 last year – an amazing feat for a small school. These fund-raising events, which include a local, national or global focus, celebrate the school's Christian outreach. In all these ways, pupils show that they are committed to making a difference to the lives of others. Pupils speak convincingly of the importance of caring, kindness and showing generosity and link these values to the teaching of Jesus and the Gospels. Pupils talk positively about RE and how this contributes to the Christian character of the school. Pupils have a growing understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and the diversity between faith communities. Pupils have a good sense of self-belief and self-worth and are being prepared well for their journey in life. The school environment is attractive and well cared for and provides pupils with many opportunities to develop aspects of Christian spirituality through quiet spaces in the playground. Thoughtful displays and relevant symbols support the understanding of Christian values. Adults at the school are good role models. Volunteers from the parish church, who help listen to pupils read, also have an emphasis on raising the Church's profile as well as responsibility for Christian nurture based on Bible teaching. The parish's ministry to the school is indeed a strength.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school's statutory responsibility for collective worship is seen through providing quality daily acts of worship either for the whole school or in class. Pupils were clear that worship identified the school's distinctive ethos. It also enabled them to think about issues in school as well as the local, national and global community and the part they played as individuals within them. Pupils say the Lord's Prayer and those spoken to during the inspection could explain their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The themes for worship are relevant and broad and reflect and support the school's core Christian values. Pupils say how much they enjoy worship and how they understand its importance in the school's daily routine. Parents join with pupils in church for the principal Christian festivals. Worship is led mainly by the head of school, senior leaders, form tutors and the vicar. Pupils were responsible recently for organising and leading worship in church to celebrate the Pentecost and this was both enjoyed and valued by the school. Pupils would welcome the opportunity to be more involved in creating and delivering worship however, and their recent experience to remember the feast of Pentecost shows that they are very capable and ready to carry this out.

The content of all collective worship in the school is Christian and the teaching of Jesus and the Bible is central. Key events from the Christian calendar are celebrated in school and pupils go the parish church for major festivals and for the Eucharist each term. The vicar is popular amongst pupils who value his presence around school, especially in leading worship. He also supports leaders and managers in their work to embed Christian distinctiveness following re-structuring. The vicar meets regularly with pupils and staff. Prayer is given a high profile in worship and pupils

participate fully in public and private prayer in school. The school prayer, written by a pupil, is known and used by all pupils. They call it their 'signature prayer'. Pupils know the value of prayer and this provides another opportunity for pupils to nurture their personal spirituality. Opportunities for personal prayer are valued by the pupils and many speak about times in their life when prayer has been helpful to them. Feedback on worship is obtained from pupils, staff, parents and governors and this is discussed informally and influences whole school development, although it is not evaluated formally by governors in their meetings.

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

The Christian vision, based upon Christian values is clearly encouraged in the school's mission statement and is lived out by the head of school and supported by staff and foundation governors. Staff and parents recognise the importance of this vision. 'The church and the school work together, there is good leadership because the parish priest works closely with the head of school' was the view of a group of parents. Pupils value the leadership opportunities they are given, say they are listened to and feel their views make a difference. Pupils value the nurture that is offered by the local church and enjoy celebrations of the Eucharist in school, when they are also, sometimes, joined by parishioners. The school's inclusive vision has enabled an ongoing evaluation of the school's Christian character and this is a real part of the executive principal's vision for the school as part of the hard federation. The school is well-supported by the diocese as it seeks new expressions of Christian distinctiveness in the wake of leadership changes.

Leaders seek the views of parents and pupils in reviewing the school and use every opportunity to challenge, monitor and evaluate the school's work. School leaders and governors are successful in ensuring that the academic, pastoral and spiritual needs of all groups of pupils are met. Issues raised at the last inspection have been fully addressed. There is a genuine desire by all leaders and governors to find ways to build on and improve the school's Christian distinctiveness still further. Governors are also totally committed to the professional development of all staff in school. Parents appreciate the dedicated work of staff in supporting their children's personal and spiritual development as well as their academic success. They speak highly of the head of school and the staff and the school's family ethos and Christian values. Parents also emphasise that the school has a staff team that are approachable and easy to access and the influence of the school reaches into the hearts of families in the village community and impacts positively on their lives too. Members of the church family feel that they are a real part of the school community and support the school well. Wider community links with village groups are also effective.

Leaders and staff inter-link religious education, personal, social, and health education (PSHE), spiritual, social moral cultural education (SMSC) and British values within their core Christian values. This ensures that pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of these values and how they affect their lives. Everyone is committed to ensuring that the school offers the very best to its pupils. Inspirational words and Bible verses displayed around the school challenge pupils to adopt a positive attitude. Pupils, through the school council, speak with maturity of the importance of British values, team work and their responsibility for God's world. The RE scheme of work has a positive impact on pupils, particularly in their understanding of Christian values and their importance in daily life. Pupils clearly understand that their school is a Christian school which makes it unique and special to them. Governors are supportive of the school's ethos and proud of pupils' success. However, a closer and more systematic monitoring of its Christian character at all leadership levels would ensure that its distinctiveness as a Church of England school is firmly embedded and more effective. This would also particularly reinforce the school's position as it grows as part of the Codsall High Federation of Schools.

SIAMS report, May 2017, Bilbrook CE VC Middle School, WV8 IEU