



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bierton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Combined School

Parsons Lane
Bierton
HP22 5DF

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 1 July 2015

Date of last inspection: May 2010

School's unique reference number: 110417

Headteacher: Jenny Martin

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby 137

School context

Bierton is an average sized primary school. Although most pupils are White British, there are an increasing number of children from other cultures and faiths. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to staffing and governance. The current headteacher was appointed acting headteacher in September 2014 and substantive headteacher in March 2015. The religious education and worship leader was appointed in January 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bierton as a Church of England school are good

- The newly appointed headteacher and leadership team supported by governors and staff have raised the profile of the distinctive Christian ethos of the school.
- As a result of Christian values and their impact on the learning environment, pupils' academic, moral and spiritual development has improved.
- The Christian ethos, broad curriculum and 'manner of the week' develop the thinking skills and confidence of pupils to share their ideas and beliefs, while treating other people with respect and tolerance.

Areas to improve

- Continue to explore and embed the explicit Christian values throughout the life of the school to celebrate its distinctive Christian character.
- Use effective assessment procedures to monitor pupils' progress in the newly introduced religious education scheme to raise standards further.
- Increase pupil involvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of worship to extend their spiritual development.

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

The school has an inclusive and caring Christian ethos founded on twelve Christian values. The display in the entrance highlights the church school status and school logo, sharing the shells of St James, the local parish church. Children readily explain that 'Christian values are what Christians should do, like Jesus did.' A 'manner of the week' based on a Christian value reinforces the profile of Christian values in the daily life of the school. As a result children are more polite and courteous. Pupils have a voice in school with the school council where they have an input in suggesting improvements. This also provides all children with opportunities to listen and respect the views of each other. Staff model Christian values and ensure the well being of each individual. Pastoral care is a strength of the school with a care worker, supported by a foundation governor. This ensures relationships and behaviour are good. Staff challenge each child as a unique individual, nurtured to achieve potential. Rigorous tracking procedures inform action plans and result in achievement that is judged to be at least in line with, or exceed national expectations. Attendance is monitored and has improved, as have instances of lateness. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is a strength of the school because of cross-curricular links, the range of visits and extra-curricular activities. The use of the school grounds, including the use of 'forest schools' promotes an awareness of stewardship. Religious education (RE) is a current focus because of the introduction of the recently introduced diocesan syllabus. A newly appointed subject leader commented 'the new units of work, introduced by posing 'big questions' bring RE to life for children.' They are clearly engaged by the lively delivery and opportunities to discuss and explore questions, respecting each other's contribution. The school is currently exploring more effective assessment procedures to measure pupil progress in the new scheme. Children have a good understanding of the diversity of faiths and cultures that is supported by their learning and members of other faiths sharing their beliefs. This promotes tolerance and respect for other faiths and the comment 'there are differences but there are more similarities.' This also includes the recognition that many of Christian values of the school are shared by other faiths. Children recognise the need to show compassion to others through supporting a range of charities.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

A daily act of worship explores Christian values, Bible stories, events in the church year and their relevance to everyday life. This enables children to relate the worship to own behaviour and attitudes. Children experience a range of leaders, including staff and the vicar. They also experience whole school and class based worship that enables deeper exploration in an age appropriate setting. A focus table, with candle, cross and Bible encourages pupils to enter with a sense of reverence and anticipation. Pupils understand the significance of the liturgical colours to mark the seasons of the church year. They have a growing understanding of Christian symbols and their meaning. During worship a candle marks the time of worship and a bell signifies the time for prayer. The high profile of hymns and prayers with references to God the Father and the Holy Spirit reinforces pupils' developing understanding of the Trinity. Children and staff are engaged by worship, with joyful singing and staff valuing the time to be with children and share reflection. Worship enables children to extend their understanding of Christian teaching. For example, as well as saints being people who have made particular contributions, everyone can aspire to be a saint by their behaviour. A project on 'Prayer spaces' has raised the profile of prayer in school as well as the opportunity to explore each line of 'The Lord's Prayer'. Children write and share prayers, especially at lunchtime. Their collected prayers in the prayer book are used during worship. The importance of prayer is also seen in the prayer group of staff, parents and governors who meet each month to pray for the school and formally record their contributions in minutes. Although children plan and develop some acts of worship, they have expressed their desire to have greater involvement. Effective monitoring by foundation governors ensures that the elements of Anglican worship are present and informs development. The school has strong links with St. James church that is used for festival services. The vicar has a high profile in school, leading worship, being a resource for RE and leading a 'moving on' session for Year 6 leavers. The JAFFA (Jesus a Friend For All) club provides opportunities for children to further develop their understanding of Christianity through fun activities, some of which have been extended to the whole school. Godly play activities are also shared to give varied opportunities for reflection.

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

The newly appointed headteacher and assistant headteacher are fully supported by governors, staff and the diocese in embedding the developing and increasingly explicit Christian ethos. Everyone understands the distinctive Christian character and Christian values underpin the strengths and areas for development. This creates an enthusiastic staff team who enjoy working together in a caring and supportive ethos. This is extended to include student teachers who recognise 'being part of a special team with positive attitudes to the ethos of the school and children's learning.' Staff and governors recognise the impact of the 'manner of the week' that makes children more aware of Christian values. They also recognise the supportive ethos for adults and children, especially in times of difficulty. The appointment of the current head (previously the deputy and member of staff) is a good example of the commitment of governors to preparing for leaders of a church school. Regular reports from the headteacher keep governors informed of progress and include aspects of church school distinctiveness. Foundation governors are successful critical friends through regular involvement in monitoring and evaluating the ethos, worship and RE. All governors have input into the self-evaluation that informs their understanding of the Christian character of the school, the importance of Christian values, RE and worship. Although the current school development plan does not have any direct reference to the Christian character of the school, a well documented and annotated RE and worship action plan sets out a clear agenda for development as a church school. Parents are rightly proud of the school and its impact on their children. They recognise that the values of the school in everyday life present 'a consistent approach and natural way to behave'. The active 'Friends of Berton' support the school with fundraising activities that involve the wider village community. These links are extended by the school inviting older members of the community to events such as Christmas Treats and VE Day celebrations. The school has links with other church schools and networks to support staff and curriculum development.

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