

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### **Blackfordby St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Off Main Street, Blackfordby, Swadlincote, DE11 8AB

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Leicester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Leicestershire
Date of inspection	21 March 2017
Date of last inspection	January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 120117
Associate headteacher	Sue Savage
Inspector's name and number	Rosemary Privett 321

#### **School context**

Blackfordby St Margaret's Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average. In November 2015 the school was judged to require improvement. There have been several changes in leadership, including a new deputy headteacher and chair of governors. The associate headteacher took up her position in September 2016. She also leads Albert Village School.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blackfordby St Margaret's as a Church of England school are good**

- The inspirational leadership of the associate headteacher and her deputy articulates and promotes a vision for the school rooted in Christian values.
- High quality relationships demonstrate the school's Christian values, of patience, hope, perseverance and constancy in action.
- The strong leadership of religious education [RE] and collective worship is improving provision for pupils.
- The high quality pastoral care provided by the school within a Christian framework enables pupils to make progress.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Develop ways in which pupils can have greater ownership of planning, leading and evaluating worship.
- Develop governors' use of SIAMS self-evaluation document so they have a context in which to consider their monitoring information.
- Develop the visual environment of the worship space to support pupils' understanding of the symbolism associated with the Trinity and the cycle of the church year.

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

The school's core values are clear from the moment you enter the school. Four beautiful stained glass windows display the school's core values of patience, hope, perseverance and constancy. Pupils see them as a constant reminder of what is important in their school. They readily acknowledge the impact of the values on their attitudes and behaviour. They say they 'help school be a better place'. However, they are only just beginning to link the values with their biblical roots. The school demonstrates its Christian values in the way it treats the whole school community as a family. This means that pupils and colleagues feel supported, motivated and respected. Relationships between all members of the community are excellent. Consequently pupils love coming to school and learn in a safe and secure Christian environment. As a result, attendance is good and exclusions are rare. An understanding of Christ's call for forgiveness and a fresh start underpins the behaviour policy. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes and actions. This reflection always happens in the context of the school motto, 'By their fruits shall you know them. This means that they know how to support one another and develop a good understanding of right and wrong. As a result, behaviour is of a high standard. Staff are good role models, seeking to live out the core values. The school shares its values explicitly through worship and RE. Pupils also experience Christian values in action when the whole school community unites to raise money for charities. The school is rapidly moving forward from the 'requires improvement' grade in the Ofsted inspection in 2015. Standards in reading and writing and maths are rising. Parents value the close attention given to the achievement and wellbeing of each individual, especially those with complex needs. Staff work effectively with families to support them. The progress of these pupils is testimony to the high quality pastoral care given to all. In this way the school's Christian character is lived out through its actions. The spiritual development of pupils is supported in a variety of ways. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) policy clearly lays out how it is developed through RE, collective worship and the wider curriculum. However, the policy has only been introduced recently. This means some of its strategies are not yet embedded. Age appropriate reflection areas in each classroom are, however, having an impact on pupils' spiritual development. They give them time and space to be quiet, think and pray. Themes such as, 'What a good friend should be', also help pupils to reflect on their place in the world and supports their moral and social development. Working walls in classrooms and lively artwork linked to RE topics, demonstrates the growing importance placed on RE. They are helping it make a more positive contribution to the school's Christian character. Pupils enjoy it because teaching strategies are now more engaging and cross curriculum boundaries. In this way, it also makes a positive contribution to their spiritual development. Through RE, pupils are beginning to develop awareness that there are Christians in many parts of the world. In response to an area of development from the last inspection, work on other faiths has recently been enhanced. Through visiting speakers and visits to a variety of places of worship, pupils experience interesting activities. As a result they now have some understanding of different faith groups. They are have a developing understanding of the importance of respecting the beliefs of others.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

The profile of collective worship has been raised since the last inspection. It now has a place of importance in the daily life of the school. Pupils enjoy it because themes are relevant and help them to make meaning. In this way it supports their spiritual development. It takes place in different settings and is lead by a variety of leaders. Staff see worship as a time which unites the school as a community. They value the space to reflect, and 'be quiet in prayer'. Worship themes follow the Leicester diocesan guidelines. Themes regularly explore biblical material and the life and teaching of Jesus so that pupils understand his importance to Christians. One act of worship each week focuses specifically on the school's Christian values. This means pupils are making links between the values and their biblical roots. The weekly class assembly and 'Send the Light' worship are now strong features of the school's provision. In class worship, pupils engage with issues and events in the wider world and consider how they might respond. They decide which of their reflections and prayers will feed into the weekly 'Send the Light' worship. These occasions are valuable because pupils make deeply personal responses and experience what it means to lead worship. A Year 2 child describes 'Send the Light' as a 'lightning bolt of love and help to people in need'. The times when they can plan and lead worship in other settings, however, are currently limited. All members of the school community, including parents, value the weekly celebration assembly. This is a time when the whole school community gathers to reward successes and reflects on a biblical quote or wise saying. It is an extension of the school's core purpose, which is focused on the development of the whole child. Reference to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is made in worship. Even though there is a focal table with a cloth and a candle, the visual environment for worship is underdeveloped. It does not support pupils' understanding of the symbolism and language associated with The Trinity or the cycle of the church year. Due to this, they struggle to explain their significance in worship. A thread of prayer runs through the school day. The Lord's Prayer and school prayer are used regularly in worship so pupils are familiar with them. They value composing their own prayers for use in 'Send the Light' worship. There are also times of quiet reflection. Through praying in these ways, pupils understand its purpose. The vicar regularly supports the worshipping life of the school and is a welcome visitor. The close proximity of the church means that pupils visit

regularly. The school attends for services at key times in the church year such as Easter and Christmas. This means that pupils are developing some understanding of the meaning behind these festivals. The impact of worship is now monitored and evaluated each term by leaders and governors. This means the worship programme remains relevant and fresh. Although monitoring activities include discussions with pupils, their role in leading aspects of this process is undeveloped. The school recognises as an area for future action.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Under the leadership of the associate headteacher the profile of RE has been raised considerably. Pupils readily articulate a very positive view of the subject. A typical comment from pupils was: 'It just gets better and better. Its really good now because we learn a lot in a fun way.' Both the associate headteacher and her deputy are ambitious for the subject. Clear and focused leadership has led to a culture of shared learning. They make wise and well-informed decisions about exactly where to focus support and training for staff. As a result, the majority of teaching is now good. This results in the majority of pupils achieving in line with expectations for their age. An effective system of assessing pupils' attainment and progress has been introduced since the last inspection. It gives teachers more precise information and results in them planning more effectively for all pupils. Through lesson observation, feedback and 'challenges' offered to staff, the subject leader effectively shares expectations for good teaching and learning. Leaders have correctly identified the need to extend monitoring to include regular scrutiny of pupils' work. Plans to involve governors in this are already in place. Christianity and teaching linked to the school's values, form the core of the RE curriculum. Relevant and exciting learning experiences have recently been introduced which support pupils' understanding of other faiths. A good example of this is the Faith Trail in Derby. Pupils of all ages visited places of worship of other faith groups and talked with members of different faith communities. These visits have a great impact on pupils, resulting in a greater respect for, and understanding of other faiths. Where teaching is at its best, pupils enthusiastically explore big questions sharing their ideas with others and applying what they know to their own lives. RE in Reception gets pupils off to a flying start. It is in tune with the investigative nature of RE, and mirrors the characteristics of good early years practice. Older pupils grapple with some complex ideas. This is seen when they analyse the possible meanings behind some of Jesus' sayings and discuss the meaning of covenant. Debate, role-play and extended writing is used to good effect. This promotes mature reflections on statements such as, 'You should follow Jesus' values even if you are not a Christian.' This ensures that they are developing some of the skills they need to do well in RE. Leaders correctly identified the need for higher order thinking skills to be developed more consistently across the whole school. To this end, they planned effectively for the implementation of the 'Understanding Christianity' resources, which support more investigative learning. These materials are also supporting pupils' developing understanding of key Christian concepts.

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

The new senior leaders promote a distinctively Christian vision for the school, underpinned by its core Christian values. Their expectations for the best possible education for all pupils within a caring Christian environment are clearly expressed. Their vision is that, 'Everyone.... can flourish in the abundance of God's love and grace as reflected in the fruits of their lives.' The school has experienced a period of transition since the Ofsted inspection in 2015, when it was judged as requiring improvement. It now effectively promotes good academic achievement as well as the spiritual development and wellbeing of pupils. Senior leaders and the chair of governors promote a robust drive for improvement. This is underpinned by the core Christian values of patience, hope, perseverance and constancy. The most recent monitoring report from Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in November 2016, acknowledges the pivotal role of leaders in driving the school forward. Careful self-evaluation now includes more groups, including parents. This has resulted in a development plan, focused on raising standards and enriching the school's distinctive character. Whole-school strategies have led to improvements in the attainment and progress of pupils. With the support of the diocese, the leader of collective worship and RE has enriched provision. Some of the initiatives are relatively recent. Her focus and determination means, however, that these are already having a very positive impact on pupils. This is seen in their increased engagement with RE and their understanding of the Christian values. Leaders use diocesan training and the support of a leader in governance effectively. As a result of this, governors now have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Through visits to RE lessons and acts of worship, foundation governors are developing a better understanding of the school's provision. However, their use of the SIAMS self-evaluation document as a tool to inform what they see is currently underdeveloped. The local church makes a significant contribution to the life of the school. Pupils look forward to activities that are based there. The vicar's involvement on the governing body is also instrumental in securing improvements in RE. The school sits at the heart of its community. Its participation in local events such as the Christmas tree dressing and Remembrance service, is greatly valued by the wider community. Through its new website and developing partnership with Albert Village School, Blackfordby's ethos and values are being shared more effectively