

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bishop Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Winston Avenue, Branksome, Poole. BH12 1PG

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Salisbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Poole
Date of inspection	15 November 2016
Date of last inspection	10 October 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 113830
Headteacher	Laura Dickson
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Pugh 819

School context

Bishop Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided is an over-subscribed, primary school that holds a good reputation within the local community. Its 600 children on roll make it a larger than average sized school with three classes in each year group. The majority of its children are of White British heritage with approximately 10% coming from other ethnic backgrounds. 7% of its children are in the early stages of learning English. Below average numbers of children receive the government Pupil Premium Grant for disadvantage. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2015 and more recently two assistant headteachers have been appointed. School staffing is generally stable.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Aldhelm's as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The school's core Christian values are known by all members of the school community and deeply embedded into all aspects of its work.
- The high quality teaching in religious education and collective worship significantly impact on the school's Christian character.
- The shared Christian commitment of the school's Headship team and governors is successfully enabling children to achieve well within a highly effective Christian environment.

Areas to improve

- Developing the school's shared understanding of spirituality so all school staff are able to effectively support the children's spiritual development across the whole curriculum including provision for spiritual spaces and planned spiritual encounters within their teaching.
- Increase the number of opportunities for children to have first-hand faith encounters, so they are able to increase their knowledge of different faiths, including their similarities and differences from Christianity.

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

Bishop Aldhelm's core Christian values of courage, love, unity and inspiration strongly underpin the school's work because they are explicit and firmly established. All school communications reflect this Christian message with the vision all are 'Loved by God, United in Learning.' Children are taught these values as soon as they start school and they form the school's special prayer, which is said daily within worship. Christian values successfully support the children's feelings of self-worth and their ambition to be the best they can be. Children who have had difficulties in other schools thrive at Bishop Aldhelm's with parents saying that the Christian environment, where every child is unique in the eyes of God, is a major factor in this achievement. Children are proud to receive a House Bishop Bond, which recognises children who demonstrate, through their learning or behaviour, the values of the school. House Captains value their roles of responsibility because they have been earned through an application and voting process. They are able to confidently and maturely describe their roles within the school with one captain explaining, 'We need to encourage children to move beyond their comfort zones and support them, for example when dealing with friendship disputes'. Children achieve well academically when compared to other schools nationally, making good progress from their individual starting points. Parents and children recognise and appreciate the extra support given to behaviour and learning. The school supports children with significant needs, and is successful in supporting them to remain within a mainstream school. Parents and children describe the school as a place where they are listened to, where issues are dealt with swiftly and sensitively. Behaviour is exemplary both in the classrooms and playground, with relationships clearly showing values of love, unity and often courage. Inclusion staff are said to be highly approachable with parents and children receiving support within a confidential and caring space. Opportunities for spiritual development and reflection are seen throughout the school, successfully supporting children's awareness of themselves, others and the word around them. However, the assistant headteacher, with responsibility for the school's Christian development, recognises the need for an agreed shared understanding of spirituality, especially for staff who are new to the school, and an increased range of planned spiritual experiences. Her deep Christian faith and passion for developing the school's Christian character with increasing pace is making an impact on the whole school community. Children show a depth of knowledge about other faiths and clearly explain the importance of treating everybody with respect, regardless of difference. Opportunities for first hand faith encounters to support the development of this understanding are not fully developed. Some children join the school during their early stages of acquiring the English language. The school's strong commitment to inclusion is demonstrated, with school documentation being translated into the 23 home languages, including the website. Children are welcomed and supported by a Young Interpreter. These are bilingual pupils in the school. Children are involved in a range of charities and are able to describe the importance of their support and what it can achieve. Children involved in the distribution of the Harvest gifts to the local food bank were so moved by their experiences that they urgently requested the opportunity to convey the message of compassion and gratitude to the other children in the school. They achieved this by leading an act of worship.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship has a central place within the daily life of the school strongly reflecting Bishop Aldhelm's Christian character. Children recall worship themes and explain how they influence everyday actions. Collective worship is carefully planned to enable the school community to develop a rich understanding of Jesus Christ and his central position within the Christian faith. Anglican traditions are used meaningfully, such as each class presenting its candle to the worship leader to show the presence of Jesus and their prayer of welcome. Enthusiastic singing and engaging resources add further to the worship quality. Children are able to link the lessons conveyed within Bible stories to the school's values and describe how these lessons impact on the way they live their lives. This is clearly evident in the respectful and understanding way they respond to each other and their positive attitudes to learning, even when facing difficulty. Children describe worship as an enjoyable and special time in the school day when they get together to learn how to be better people. Time is given for reflection during worship and also through the school day, allowing children to raise their aspirations. Children say this makes an impact on their learning because they take responsibility for their own actions and conduct. Children's voice is influential in shaping daily worship experiences, for example, the increased use of drama and focus objects. Worship planning includes a range of visitors and services held within the church. This gives children a rich variety of worship experiences and styles. Children have an age appropriate understanding of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit explaining that they are three as one. During the absence of the school vicar, the school is extremely well supported by other church groups. This includes worship services, extra-curricular activities and lunchtime prayer groups. Children are able to explain the meaning of prayer, in their lives within worship and personal prayer. The very well supported lunchtime Blaze Club, led by a church visitor, is held in the school's chapel. It allows children to explore prayer and its impact at a deeper level. Governor monitoring, within church activities has evidenced the successful impact of this work. Worship visitors say that they are warmly welcomed into the school and highly supported in their Christian role.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

The religious education (RE) curriculum is exciting, engaging and challenging. Standards are at least as high as those in core subjects and its content significantly impacts on shaping the school's Christian character. The important status of RE within the school curriculum is evident as it is the first subject reported upon in the school's annual report to parents, alongside literacy, maths and science. Assessment is regular and detailed, showing the children's attainment within the expected standards for their age. The school uses the Bournemouth and Poole agreed syllabus and the Discovery scheme. The school was praised by one of the authors of the Discovery scheme for its outstanding RE teaching, with particular reference to the engagement of pupils within a challenging curriculum. Children are able to appreciate and articulate both sides of key questions stating, 'Sometimes we can agree to disagree but we still respect everyone's views.' Religious education themes also include key events such as child led Remembrance Day services and Anti-Bullying week with constant reference to the Christian values of the school. The delivery of RE into condensed study weeks is successful in maximising pupil interest, enthusiasm and impact. Detailed class portfolios capture RE learning encounters over a number of years illustrating the richness of the RE curriculum. These portfolios also include detailed statements from the children, providing strong evidence of high levels of learning. Children study other faiths and are able to discuss their key features as well as similarities and differences to Christianity. They understand the importance of each faith to those who believe in them. More opportunities for children to have first-hand experiences will strengthen the school's multi faith teaching and the school is already actively searching for visitors and visits linked to different faiths. The RE leader works with other members of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) team in ensuring the quality of RE teaching. Regular monitoring and professional development ensures all members of staff acquire the necessary skills for delivering high quality RE teaching. This is evident in the learning behaviours of children in lessons and the quality of teacher questioning, to promote deeper thinking. Governors have a strong presence within the school and undertake their own regular monitoring of RE. The information gathered informs the governors when challenging the school leadership regarding RE teaching and learning. Significant expertise exists within the school and local community and the school utilises this to its fullest capacity in order to enhance RE provision. This includes the involvement of governors, church members and local church groups, such as the Explorer group and Uniformed organisations.

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

The vision, ethos and ambition of Bishop Aldhelm's for its pupils and other stakeholders are deeply rooted in shared Christian values and the 'Spirit of Bishop Aldhelm's' vision. The home – school agreement between parents and the school is designed around the school's Christian vision, explaining its commitment to achieve high academic standards within a strong Christian environment. The development points from the previous inspection have been addressed, however, due to staff changes and significantly increased pupil numbers, the school is continuing to develop some aspects of these to ensure they are appropriate to changing pupil profiles and needs. The school's leadership ensures that children and staff are central to all school decisions with policies and procedures arising from these discussions. This has resulted in a community where everybody has a voice and feels valued as an integral part of the school's Christian work. Some families have become closer to the church through the work of the school. The school's leadership is strongly supported by those with a strong personal Christian faith, from a range of Christian churches. This helps to give a deeper understanding of what makes a successful and outstanding Christian school. Rigorous and frequent monitoring of RE, collective worship and Christian distinctiveness by school leaders, including governors, guides and influences their decisions and identifies actions to develop the school further. The RE and collective worship leader is able to clearly articulate her development plans and how they will improve provision. For example, she has detailed plans and has successfully secured funding for a spiritual garden within the school grounds. The positioning of this reflective space is well considered to include parents as well as children. The school has very close links with local church communities that have been especially important during the absence of an incumbent. Diocesan professional development supports the school's leaders. This training has been successfully used to train others in the school. Parents praise the school for its inclusiveness and support. They give examples of difficult times in their lives and describe how the school's actions have supported the whole family. They also appreciate the school's emphasis on nurturing each individual, however challenging their needs, and the life changing impact this has had on their children and family relationships. The school leadership actively seeks the views of stakeholders to test the impact of its work. Feedback is positive from all members of the community, for example, 'It promotes values that I share and promotes a nurturing environment for my child. This encourages outward thinking and a caring approach that I feel will prepare my son to make a real contribution in life'. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.