



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Berkley Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Berkley Street
Berkley
Frome
BA11 5JH

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding
Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding
Diocese: Bath and Wells
Local authority: Somerset

Date of inspection: 22nd March 2016

Date of last inspection: 16th March 2011

School's unique reference number: 123743

Headteacher: Claire Chantler (Interim Executive Head)

Inspector's name and number: Carolyn Banfield - 610

School context

With 103 pupils, Berkley Church of England VA First School is a smaller than average village school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities is above the national average but none have a statement or EHC plan. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well below the national average. Currently, the school has an interim executive head shared with Beckington School.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Berkley Church school are outstanding

- The school has a clear and strong Christian ethos which underpins all aspects of school life, with the result that all pupils are nurtured, supported and highly valued.
- An exciting and enriching curriculum which inspires pupils to give of their best contributes to the excellent attainment and progress made by all groups of learners.
- Links with the church community and regular interactions with the church building significantly enhance the Christian character and pupils' learning experiences.

Areas to improve

- Expand pupil understanding of global issues and cultural diversity by further implementing the Global Learning Programme thus promoting school and human values
- Implement a new system of assessment in RE which helps to inform planning and provide learners with clear guidelines on how to improve their work.
- Governors to use monitoring and evaluation processes to consider the depth and impact of the church distinctiveness on the lives and achievements of learners.

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

Berkley has a distinctively Christian ethos that promotes an outstanding desire to learn and achieve. Because this is securely underpinned by Christian values that pervade the practice and policy of the school, these are readily seen in action throughout the school day. Pupils naturally link the values to biblical teaching and this has a profound effect on their behaviour, attitudes and relationships. The mission statement 'Within the love of God we care, enjoy, celebrate, aspire and learn together' is fully embraced in every sense of the word and together with its vision becomes the embodiment of the commitment that all will achieve their full potential. Consequently, pupils are inspired and enthused by the enriching learning experiences and the opportunities presented. Carefully selected initiatives such as 'Learning Gems' have a direct impact on the ethic of learning whilst also fully supporting the vision, ethos and values of the school. As there is a clear interpretation of spirituality, occasions engendering 'awe and wonder' are many, and pupil responses to the provision made for their social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development is excellent. Gaps between different groups are reduced because systems are in place to effectively meet the needs of individuals. As a result and by the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' academic achievement is above and very often significantly above the national average in all subjects. Achievement of all types is celebrated and genuinely applauded whether academic or a simple act of kindness. Because this is often carried out during worship in church, pupils have a strong sense that what they do is intrinsically linked with the teachings of Jesus. As one child commented, "God created everything for us to enjoy so we should do our very best to make Him proud of everything that we do." This contributes significantly to personal well-being and is manifested in the confidence demonstrated by the pupils and their willingness to take on a variety of responsibilities and share what they have through a range of charitable giving. The school's Christian ethos influences its approach to attendance, exclusions and its work generally with vulnerable individuals. The Global Learning Programme is helping to bring Christian and human values together in a meaningful way and has the potential to enhance the cultural development of pupils further.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Because worship is well planned and organised, there is a very explicit and tangible connection between bible teaching, Christian values and the daily lives of all in this school community. As a result, pupils speak with confidence about the way in which worship shapes their thinking and actions. They are acutely aware of the impact this has on others. Worship is, therefore, fundamental to the Christian character of this school and makes an excellent contribution to pupils' SMSC development through the experiences it provides. Pupils specifically describe the singing and musical elements of worship as an uplifting and unifying experience; an opportunity to "praise God for who He is and what He means to us." Links with the church community are strong and mutually beneficial adding much to the variety and style of worship on offer. The close proximity of the church building is a huge asset allowing the school to worship there at least twice a week. Consequently, pupils are very reassured by their surroundings, at ease with the proceedings and are acquiring an excellent grasp of the nature of worship and the Christian faith. This is strengthened further by the twice termly contributions pupils make to the Sunday family services which are well attended and supported by parents. Celebrations of major Christian festivals successfully enhance an awareness of the Christian year. Whether through the performance of the nativity story, for example, or the act of decorating the church for Harvest, pupils are provided with a context to express a growing sense of spirituality. Prayer and time for reflection is a central facet of worship and indeed an important element of the school day. Subsequently pupils confidently share their own prayers, have a heightened awareness of the purpose of prayer and a strong conviction that prayer will be answered. Because of the focus given to the person of Jesus, the liturgical responses used and the artefacts symbolising the Trinity, pupils demonstrate a growing awareness of God as Father,

Son and Holy Spirit. From the high levels of engagement right through to the contributions made towards monitoring, it is clear that the involvement of pupils in worship has increased since the last inspection.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

With a high profile within the school, Religious Education (RE) is a creative subject making full use of first hand experiences to capture the imaginations of its pupils. Following monitoring and as an outcome of the subject leader's involvement in developing a distinctively local scheme of work, pupils at Berkley now benefit from relevant and meaningful visits and participation in activities such as the Well Dressing project in Frome. RE makes an outstanding contribution to the Christian character of the school because it forges strong links to the school values and provides a structure that allows the children to explore diversity and difference both within the church and other faith communities. Extremely good, often outstanding teaching ensures that pupils are fully engaged and are inspired by the content. As a result, pupils make excellent progress and standards of attainment in RE are in line with the other subject areas. The quality of pupils work is reflected in portfolios of evidence, their written work and in oral responses recorded by the adults who work with them. Pupils do not always know how to improve their work because marking and feedback in RE does not consistently provide them with next steps to learning. However, due to curriculum changes and an opportunity to implement new procedures of assessment, the RE leader is ready to address this issue. Pupil knowledge of Christianity is exceptional and articulated with great confidence and conviction. Commensurate with age, the teaching and subsequent understanding of the Easter message (as observed in Y1/2 and Y4) is outstanding. This clearly demonstrates how expertly teachers bring together learning about and learning from religion to successfully impact on pupil knowledge whilst also creating space and opportunities for them to apply and develop their skills. Parents remark on how often their children talk about their RE lessons and regularly want to explore their learning further at home.

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

The pursuit of excellence is both tangible and profound and evident at all levels of leadership. The Christian vision and values result in outstanding performance and academic achievement, impacting directly on personal development and well-being. The distinctive Christian character of the school is strong because the vision closely informs the nature of the school's taught curriculum and influences strategic decisions. Charged with monitoring the ongoing quality of the schools church foundation, the SIAMS committee uses its findings to inform planning and improve outcomes, regularly reporting back to the full governing body. As a result, governors are well informed and recognise the benefits to be gained if greater emphasis is placed on the impact of church school distinctiveness on pupils and the influence this has on the depth of their learning experience. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet the statutory requirements and leadership is excellent. Issues raised at the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Interventions are timely when improving the outcomes for all learners, and the innovative use of pupil premium and sports funding effectively supports individual need. The school works very hard to ensure that partnership with parents is beneficial. As a result, there is an impressive level of understanding amongst the parents of what the school stands for, making Berkley a school of parental choice. They believe that the shared Christian values have a positive influence on their children's behaviour and overall SMSC development. The outstanding quality of pastoral care is identified as a strength and parents acknowledge the lengths to which staff will go to meet the needs of all individuals. As one parent said, "this frequently exceeds our expectations." Staff and governors benefit from purposeful professional development which enhances the school's Christian character and supports all aspects of school improvement. The excellent partnership with the church offers an insight into faith and the ease of access means that all see the church building as an extension of the school. Collaboration with other local schools and community groups is very productive thus making a

significant contribution to the schools distinctiveness and pupil achievement. The role of the executive headteacher is testament to this concept and the governing body have been thorough in their exploration of possible leadership structures for the future.

SIAMS report March 2016 Berkley Church of England VA First School, Frome, BA11 5JH