

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Barrow Church of England Primary School

Great Barrow, Chester CH3 7HW

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Chester

Previous SIAS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Cheshire West and Chester

Date of inspection

9 March 2018

Date of last inspection

February 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary controlled 111270

Acting headteacher

Lucy Wainwright

Inspector's name and number

Jean Forward 625

School context

Barrow C of E Primary School is below average in size and is situated in a rural area east of Chester. Recently, there has been a steady increase in pupil numbers. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage and come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is in line with the national average. The percentage of those identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above. At the end of KS2 in 2017, the percentage of pupils reaching expected standards in reading and maths was above the national average and slightly below in writing.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barrow as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong Christian leadership and vision of the acting headteacher, supported by committed staff and governors, ensure that the school's Christian distinctiveness and ethos are central to daily life.
- The school creates a secure and inclusive environment rooted in explicit Christian values. This has a direct influence on pupils' well-being and positive attitudes to school life.
- The school demonstrates outstanding Christian service to its families, transforming lives through a deep sense of compassion and love.
- Relationships across the school community are extremely strong and have their foundation in Christian love and respect. As a result, every individual feels valued and supported as a child of God.
- Worship is central to the school day. It sets Christian values in their biblical context and enriches the spiritual life of all members of the school family.

Areas to improve

- Further develop a more formal approach to monitoring and evaluation of worship which includes all members of the school community. This will ensure that worship develops and is relevant.
- In order to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the key elements of worship, provide opportunities for them to learn how to plan and lead in a more independent way.

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

Barrow is a haven of Christian love and service. The school's vision is deeply Christian and demonstrates strong commitment to enabling all pupils to reach their 'optimum potential'. The school's core Christian values are embedded and consistently practised. They are a thread which runs through every aspect of the school's life. A high level of pastoral care and encouragement is directly linked to the Christian life experienced by all members of the school community. Pupils talk about the importance of the school's Christian values in their daily life. A Year 6 pupil said, 'Christian values help us to show respect and to help each other. They make us happier.'

The positive relationships across the community are rooted in a Christ-centred approach and enable everyone to flourish. All members of the community know they are valued and the ethos of Christian respect is clearly evident. Pupils say that they are encouraged and supported by the staff and are able to share their concerns, knowing that these will be addressed in a caring way. A Year 4 pupil said, 'I can always say when I don't understand something.'

Staff also speak of the ways in which the Christian ethos of the school supports them professionally and personally. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is central to the school's work and ensures that individual needs are being met through a balanced and creative curriculum and a wide range of intervention strategies. Pupils have access to a variety of extra-curricular activities which broaden their experience and help to develop teamwork and social skills. A Year 5 pupil said that he values the opportunity to try new sports. Pupils enjoy being members of the school council and understand that this is an opportunity to demonstrate Christian service in and beyond the school. The school has a commitment to Christian stewardship through its support of many charities, locally and internationally. Pupils recognise the importance of showing generosity to those in need and understand that this is rooted in the teaching of Jesus.

Pupils are happy and enthusiastic about learning and school life. This is affirmed by parents who say that the school's core Christian values have a positive influence on their children's attitude to and understanding of the needs of others. Displays, Christian symbols and artefacts emphasise the school's Christian character and prompt the pupils' spiritual awareness extremely well. Pupils value the classroom reflection areas and say that they can use them at any time when they need to be quiet and peaceful. One Year 6 pupil said that the school's prayer book 'draws you in' through words and illustrations.

The school widens pupils' knowledge of non-Christian faiths through carefully planned religious education (RE). This contributes well to cultural knowledge, understanding of diversity and to positive attitudes about society today. An awareness of Christianity as a worldwide faith is supported through links with schools in Ghana and Sierra Leone.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

All members of the school community recognise the importance of collective worship and the central part it plays in the life of the school. Pupils enjoy worship. They engage well and there is a real sense of coming together to be with God. Acts of worship follow a clear pattern which gives pupils a sense of liturgical structure. Responses for gathering and dismissal are said every day and mirror those used in the parish church.

Worship themes are planned carefully and include biblical teaching, Christian values and the festivals and seasons of the Christian calendar. Each half term's theme is based on a Christian value and this ensures that pupils are able to link the values to the life of Jesus and their own lives. Members of the teaching staff, the parish priest and the Open the Book team from the parish lead worship on a weekly basis. The pupils enjoy these varied worship experiences which broaden their understanding of Christian teaching and tradition. Prayer and reflection have a central role in all worship and pupils understand that it is a way of being still and close to God. One Year 5 pupil said, 'Prayer is a time when we can talk to God. We say amen because we want to.' Pupils' understanding of the meaning and purpose of prayer is developed further through the classroom reflection areas, prayers at lunchtime and at the end of the day. Members of staff say that worship supports their spiritual life and that they take strength from worshipping together with the pupils.

Pupils are involved in worship through music, drama and reading when celebrating major festivals in the church. This gives them a greater sense of being part of the wider family of the church. As yet, they have not had the opportunity to plan and lead worship independently. Systems for monitoring and evaluating worship have not been fully implemented since the last inspection. A monitoring book for pupils is now in place but the responses of adults in the school community are not recorded in a formal way. Pupils have some understanding of the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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

Highly effective Christian leadership drives everything the school does to develop and promote its Christian distinctiveness. The acting headteacher, staff and governors have a clear and strong vision for the school based on

Christian principles and values. This is rooted in a determination that every pupil will have the opportunity to thrive and feel safe and secure in a loving environment. Staff are committed to fostering all aspects of pupils' development and well-being through Christian care and love. In doing so, they recognise the importance of creating a Christian ethos which supports effective learning and equal opportunities.

The school knows its pupils and their families extremely well and meets individual needs through a culture of unconditional Christian compassion. The school's involvement with the local charity Save the Family demonstrates the way in which it puts faith into social action. It ensures that when the most vulnerable families are in distress, the school can be a Christian presence and support in their lives. Parents recognise the distinctive Christian character of the school and believe that it contributes to pupils' sense of security and readiness to learn. They say that their children are being 'shaped as individuals' and that every need is being met through the school's nurturing approach. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the daily life of the school and this strengthens relationships. The school has extremely strong links with St. Bartholomew's church. The parish priest is a visible presence in the school and he provides pastoral support as well as a commitment to leading worship. The school and parish work together on many events and this reinforces the school's involvement in the wider village community.

Members of the governing body are well-informed and dedicated. They ask challenging questions and provide a high level of support. They have made bold decisions to ensure that the school gives pupils the very best start in their education. These include the appointment of a reception teacher, extensive training for staff to meet the social and emotional needs of pupils and the provision of space for the Barrow pre-school. Action plans for church school distinctiveness are included in the school's development planning. The designated RE governor monitors all aspects of the school's Christian character. In this way, governors are fully informed about and involved in the Christian vision and strategic development of the school.

The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship and areas for development although the actions from the previous inspection have not been fully addressed. The RE subject leader monitors teaching and learning through observations, book scrutiny and tracking of progress. She provides strong leadership and support which encourages staff and enhances the quality of teaching and learning.

The school is outward-looking and is involved in improvement activities with its local cluster. A strong partnership with the diocese through discussion and training has contributed to the development of leadership and the enhancement of provision for RE and worship.

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