

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bolton by Bowland Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Gisburn Road, Bolton by Bowland, BB7 4NP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	20 January 2017
Date of last inspection	May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 119688
Executive Headteacher	Paul Holden
Inspector's name and number	Tracy Heys 831

School context

Bolton by Bowland is a very small rural primary school serving an area with relatively low levels of social deprivation. The school works in a collaborative partnership with Grindleton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School. A new headteacher began at the school in January 2017, who is also head of Grindleton. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well below the national average. The diocesan boundaries have changed since the last inspection and the school is now part of the Blackburn diocesan family of schools

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bolton by Bowland as a Church of England school are good

- Relationships throughout the school are positive and encouraging. There is a clear sense of how Christian teaching is applied to everyday life. As a result behaviour is exemplary.
- The distinctive Christian character of the school has been well established over a number of years and the new headteacher has brought a valuable and fresh perspective to its work.
- The local church is an integral part of the life of the school through their foundation governors and other members of the congregation.

Areas to improve

- Identify a clear set of Christian values which are explicit and can be articulated by the whole school community.
- Ensure that learning activities in all religious education (RE) lessons provide significant challenge for pupils of all abilities.

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

Bolton by Bowland Church of England School is a school where pupils are nurtured as unique individuals who are loved by God. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make good academic progress. It is a calm, happy school where pupils are encouraged to develop self-confidence and consideration for others. As a result, their behaviour and relationships are exemplary. The Christian ethos of the school clearly enhances pupils' spiritual development. They are able to clearly articulate the impact of the school's Christian teaching on their own lives. Parents agree that the Christian character of the school has an impact on the whole school community. One parent said she was delighted that 'biblical principles are adopted and applied to every aspect of school life; they don't just teach Christianity they live it.' Pupils say RE helps them to think about God and 'how special He is'. Both parents and pupils value the strong sense of 'community'. A governor referred to the bond between school and church by saying, 'It is very easy to assume that one is an extension of the other.' Pupils are learning to see themselves as global citizens in a world where God values all human beings. They have a developing understanding of diverse communities and cultures through their links with charities and a school in South Africa. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural values are developed in pupils through all areas of the curriculum. For example, they are frequently involved in fund raising activities for different charities and they see this as a Christian response to meeting the needs of others. Pupils are eager to discuss their views of the importance of sharing what they have with those in need. In its pursuit of excellence, the school ensures that pupils are actively engaged in activities to achieve their educational potential. Their spiritual nurturing is fundamental to the school's mission, with careful thought being put into providing experiences with time for reflection. The school's mission statement is currently under review. However, there is a palpable Christian ethos based on principles of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. The school environment makes a positive contribution to the spiritual development of all pupils through RE displays and encouraging pupils to explore the awe and wonder of God's world. Pupils value the opportunity to express their concerns as well as their praises through prayer but do comment on the lack of spaces for prayer and reflection.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is important to the pupils of Bolton by Bowland and they readily identify the meaningful aspects of prayer and songs that enhance their daily gathering. Themes are based on the Christian calendar as well as Christian values taken from the 'Values for Life' resource. Stories from the Bible are used to illustrate the themes and values. Worship is inclusive, so all pupils and adults are invited to respond in their own way. A number of staff and visitors lead worship which ensures it has variety and engages the school community. Pupils and staff sing animatedly and with passion; this contributes to an effective atmosphere in which worship takes place. Appropriate features of Anglican worship are used. For example, there is a central worship table with Christian symbols and candles are lit. Pupils enjoy the drama and respond enthusiastically to questions. Time for reflection is built into worship which pupils say they find helps them to think about what has been said. Consequently, one Key Stage 2 pupil said that during and after worship he felt, 'calm and safe'. Following a collective worship where the theme was trust one pupil said, 'we can trust anyone in our school because we know they all love God and we try to love each other.' The themes introduced in worship are carried into cross curricular links which helps to deepen personal spirituality throughout the school day. Pupils confidently apply Christian principles introduced in worship to their own lives. A Year 5 girl said; 'in worship we are reminded to try and behave like Jesus. If we fall out we try our best to forgive because that's what Jesus would do.' Pupils and parents reflect positively and fondly on the links with the parish church and particularly the effort put into the Link Club. The Link Club sessions for pupils helps to further raise their awareness of the church's calendar and Anglican traditions. Each teaching session of approximately 6 weeks ends with an act of worship in church. Pupils readily articulate the importance of Jesus for Christians and say that prayer enables them to 'take our worries to Jesus.' The school has identified the pupils' understanding of the Trinity as an area for development. Governors, staff and pupils have limited input into the planning and evaluation of worship. The new headteacher has recognised this and there is an appropriate action plan in place for future development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has a high profile in the school. It makes a positive contribution to the distinctively Christian ethos of the school and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. RE has equal status with other core subjects in staffing, responsibility and resourcing. As a result, it is given sufficient dedicated curriculum time. The standard of attainment for the large majority of pupils is in line with national expectations and pupil's achievement in RE is similar to other subjects in the school. Portfolios of assessed work for both key stages have been used to show progression in RE. Pupils are well motivated and enjoy RE because they are presented with thought provoking ideas which stimulate their curiosity and engage their imagination and creativity. They are good listeners and willing to

reflect and think about ideas presented to them. Pupils from across the school are eager to share what they are learning in RE and can apply teaching to their own lives. For example, upper key stage 2 pupils confidently explained how the Jewish story of Hanukkah reminds them that God will give them what they need. Differentiation is often by outcome and there is limited evidence of challenge for the more able pupils. This has been identified by the school as an area for development. The diocesan syllabus is adapted and used for mixed age teaching and gives pupils an understanding of Christianity and the other major faiths represented in this country. As they move through the school, pupils have a deepening knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, practices and value systems of a range of faiths. Strong links with the worshipping congregation of the church and the vicar mean that the teaching of Christianity is a strength of the school. Local Christians are used to enhance the schools teaching and pupils clearly enjoy learning about different perspectives of Christianity. The new headteacher is now the RE subject leader. He has correctly identified areas for improvement in RE and is enthusiastic and realistic about how these can be accomplished.

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

The new headteacher has given the Christian vision of the school a new energy and urgency to focus on revisiting the mission statement and values of the school. Parents are confident that the distinctively Christian character of the school aids their child's learning and that the caring Christian environment enables each child to flourish as an individual. One parent stated that 'the all-embracing feel of God's presence surrounds you the minute you walk through the door.' Excellent teamwork with very effective communication allows for individual needs to be met in a supportive and caring Christian environment. This is evident through the good progress pupils make during their time at the school. Standards of achievement are high and personal development good. The local church, through their foundation governors and other members of the congregation are an integral part of the life of the school. Governors are highly supportive and robust in their challenge to the school. The whole school community comment on the effectiveness of relationships in the school that promote the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of every individual. The focuses for development from the last inspection had been addressed. However, over the last eighteen months there is less evidence of this. Appropriate training and support have been identified for the new headteacher and the diocesan adviser is working closely with him. There is evidence of appropriate training for all staff. However, there is little evidence of strategic succession planning. In this small village school there are extremely effective partnerships with the local community, its partner school and wider links which enriches the lives of all pupils. As a result, pupils themselves comment on how they love to share their special school with others. For example 'it was really good when we had a Fair Trade breakfast. Older people from the village came and we raised lots of money. We try to make people's lives better because that is part of being a Christian.' The pupils value the fact that their views and opinions are taken seriously and often acted upon. RE and worship are well led, managed and resourced by the headteacher, ensuring that both these areas meet statutory requirements. The Christian character of the school is strong and has a positive impact on the whole school community. However, it is not coherently expressed in school documentation or a mission statement that pinpoints exactly what drives the school forward. The school correctly identifies the need for a clear set of values which the whole school community can express and live out.

SIAMS report January 2017 Bolton by Bowland Church of England VA Primary School BB7 4NP