

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Borden Church of England Academy

School Lane, Borden, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8JS	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Canterbury
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 August 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	Potential in Everyone Academy Trust
Date of inspection	2 July 2018
Date of last inspection	20 May 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy VA equivalent 144867
Headteacher	Karen Godsell
Chief Executive Officer	David Whitehead
Inspector's name and number	Melanie Williams 911

School context

Borden is a small, village primary academy on the outskirts of Sittingbourne and is part of a local, church, multi-academy trust. The headteacher and senior teacher were new to the school in September 2017. The pupils are mainly of White British heritage but with a growing number from other cultures, particularly of African descent. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those with English as an additional language is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with complex educational needs is slightly higher than average. The incumbent has been in post since 2017.

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

- The school values of love, hope and forgiveness are deeply embedded in the life of the school so that pupils apply them in their relationships and the challenges of daily life.
- Pupils confidently take on leadership of all aspects of collective worship.
- The religious education (RE) curriculum has a high profile in the school and makes a strong impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils.
- The deepening relationship between the school and parish church is offering an enriched and appreciated experience of worship for the whole community.
- All stakeholders contribute to school evaluation so that leaders have a thorough understanding of school performance and distinctiveness. Consequently, improvement plans are well-founded and effective.

Areas to improve

- Establish a shared statement of what spirituality means in this school to help with the evaluation of pupils' spiritual development.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith in preparation for their lives in diverse global communities.
- Develop the vision of the school to clarify that it is underpinned by Christian theology and continue to ensure that this shapes the development of the whole curriculum.

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

The school's Christian values of love, hope and forgiveness are clearly expressed throughout the school, in documentation and on the school website. Leaders strongly express their commitment to developing the Christian mission of the school. All groups within the community understand the distinctive Christian roots of the values and pupils readily link them to biblical stories and ideas. These values are deeply embedded in the life of the school community and they have a positive impact on how pupils and adults relate to one other. Parents appreciate that the values shape the school's open, inclusive attitude towards them and their children. The school mission statement promotes the SMSC development of its pupils as it recognises that this is a vital factor in their wellbeing and learning. As a result, pupil achievement is generally very high, with a large majority of pupils reaching expected standards and a high proportion working at greater depth. All groups make good progress. The school is ambitious in helping its pupils to reach their potential. To this end, it is rigorous in promoting good attendance so that crucial learning experiences are not lost. Attendance is above national averages. There have been no exclusions for many years. Leaders have a strong commitment to providing high quality experiences through the curriculum and the environment that help develop pupils' personal spirituality. For example, in science lessons, pupils have made electrically lit crosses that illustrate Jesus as the light of the world. However, a shared expression of what spirituality means in this school has not been formalised. All classrooms have areas for prayer and reflection and there is an excellent space for this purpose in the playground to which pupils have contributed. Pupils' excellent behaviour stems from the school values. They show love in being able to control their thoughts and emotions when they know that to express them would hurt someone's feelings. Pupils describe how hope encourages them to persevere in their work. They are also proactive in choosing which charities they want to support and organising ways in which to raise funds. The RE curriculum, and wider opportunities provided, actively support pupils' social and cultural development. There is clear evidence in pupils' work that they reflect on Christian values in RE. Pupils have an excellent understanding of diversity and difference when thinking about Christianity and the major world faiths. However, they are not fully aware of the multi-cultural, global nature of Christianity. RE provides rich, challenging experiences that help pupils shape and refine their ideas. The study of beliefs and practices strongly supports pupils' SMSC development and makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the school day and takes place in various groupings and settings each week. It provides a stimulating and inclusive environment, in which the community comes together to learn and reflect on important themes. Planning for this year has been based around the school's values, festivals, saints' days and particular themes such as difference and diversity. Pupils are highly engaged during worship. This has helped to establish a deep understanding and application of values in their relationships and daily life. Worship routinely includes Bible passages which pupils confidently volunteer to read. They are familiar with a wide range of Bible stories that illustrate the school values. For example, the story of Joseph's dreams shows them how God can give them hope in a difficult situation. Pupils take responsibility for setting up the hall for worship. This includes preparing a visual focus table using seasonal church colours and lighting a candle. They also manage songs and images using the audio-visual equipment. Pupils enjoy acting out stories, such as the parable of the talents, with great panache. They respond to weekly challenges, such as identifying and valuing their own and others' talents by adding to a display. Worship starts with sentences and responses such as 'The Lord be with you - and also with you'. Festivals of the church year such as Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day and Pentecost form part of the annual programme. Pupils are encouraged to choose to lead worship sessions from the termly published programme of themes. They are increasingly confident in planning and leading whole acts of worship. Pupils know traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer and their school prayer which reflects the values. Pupils of all ages volunteer prayers spontaneously in worship, with relevance to the theme. Worship, over time, has enabled pupils to have a strong knowledge of Jesus Christ and his centrality in the Christian faith. The celebration of festivals, such as Pentecost, has given pupils a growing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They talk about the Holy Spirit as living inside them and helping them to make the right decisions. In response to discussions with pupils, the leadership of worship has been broadened. Staff, clergy, pupils and visitors from other Christian organisations now routinely lead aspects of the programme. There are regular visits to the parish church of St Peter and St Paul for festival services. Each class also has an annual, age appropriate, Eucharist service in the church. The views of staff, governors and pupils have been gathered and used effectively to improve the quality of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The standard of attainment in RE is strong and broadly in line with the school's high achievement in other core subjects. The introduction of new teaching resources has enabled rapid progress across the school in pupils' deeper understanding of Christianity. The planning cycle includes topics on the major world faiths and pupils are able to make clear links and distinctions between them. Pupils clearly enjoy RE and speak with enthusiasm about the wide range of experiences that they encounter. Each topic begins with a key question and teachers are highly skilled in challenging pupils to think deeply about the ideas that are presented to them. This has led to an atmosphere in which themes and opinions can be discussed openly and sensitively. Pupils ask further penetrating questions to help them to clarify their thinking. They draw on previous learning to analyse and interpret new information and images. Pupils understand that religious belief affects how people choose to live their lives. Careful planning allows pupils to reflect and express their thoughts in original and creative ways such as through art, poetry and drama. Teaching is securely good throughout the school and is sometimes outstanding. In response to a previous denominational inspection report, the school has established assessment procedures that track pupils' attainment in RE. This has enabled the school to identify where pupils have needed extra challenge or support. Focussed support has led to accelerated progress for particular pupils. RE has a very high profile in the school. Every class has an interactive display that develops vocabulary and celebrates and extends thinking about each new topic. Special events, led by visitors, where pupils learn about Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism have further enriched their experience of a range of faiths and cultures. Pupils are articulate in the way they speak about the beliefs and practices of the faiths they have studied. There is an established programme of monitoring, such as lesson observations, involving senior staff and governors. Frequent and rigorous analysis of pupil work in line with other subjects, such as English, ensures that there are high expectations in RE. As a result, action plans have successfully brought about improvement in areas such as questioning skills. The RE leader is experienced and passionate about her subject. She attends all relevant training. Her drive and enthusiasm have brought about significant improvements in this school and others in the local area and academy trust.

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

The school has been through a period of change but now has a headteacher who is assured and confident in promoting and developing the Christian vision and values of the school. The established values of the school have received fresh impetus and the whole community is conscious of how they impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. There is a vision statement and aims that set out what the school hopes to achieve. However, it is not clear as to how this is underpinned by theology. The new leadership has a well-developed grasp of school performance and its Christian distinctiveness. Self-evaluation has involved all stakeholders and has led to plans that accurately identify and address key areas for improvement. Strategic changes have brought about an improvement in pupils' attainment, helping them to reach their potential. A new section has been included on the school plan to actively focus development around the Christian ethos of the school. The curriculum for RE and collective worship has been developed to promote the vision and values of the school. Plans are well underway to embed the vision and values across the curriculum, building on the successful enquiry-based approach in RE. The relationship between the church and school has been invigorated by new leadership in both places, offering enthusiastic, mutual support. This is breathing new life into the community and the attendance of pupils and their families at church services has grown. The school has received significant financial support from the diocese and local authority to address site maintenance issues. It has also benefitted from diocesan support in the preparations to convert to a church academy. The school provides leadership for RE across several local church and non-church schools. There are close links with the diocesan education team to draw on their expertise. Wherever possible, the school joins in with community projects and opportunities. Examples of this include entertaining older people in a local residential home and taking part in community preparations to commemorate the end of the First World War. Pupils gain a perspective of life in other global communities through their charitable initiatives. Parents support aspects of school life but their potential contribution is not fully developed. School leaders bring an assured understanding of leadership in church schools which it is using to promote and develop skills across the workforce. The leadership of RE and collective worship are strong, leading to highly effective and continually improving practice. The school meets statutory requirements for both collective worship and religious education.

SIAMS report July 2018 Borden Church of England Primary Academy, School Lane, Borden, Kent. ME98JS