

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bodiam Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	Bodiam, Robertsbridge East Sussex TN32 5UH
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	East Sussex
Name of Multi-Academy Trust	Riverside Federation (July 2016)
Date of inspection	4 October 2016
Date of last inspection	February 2011
School's unique reference number	114529
Headteacher	Margaret Williams
Inspector's name and number	Pamela Draycott (161)

School context

Whilst smaller than average sized, Bodiam Church of England Primary School has more pupils than at the time of the previous denominational inspection. Recent building work has enabled it to accommodate these additions. Its 104 pupils are arranged in four classes. An informal partnership with another Church of England school was recently formalised as the Riverside Federation. Most pupils are of White British heritage. St Giles parish church is a short walk away and regularly visits are made. In June 2016 the incumbent died. He was often in school to lead worship and to offer pastoral support.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bodiam Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher has an extremely strong and effective commitment to the school's continued development, based on its Christian foundation, values and principles. In this, she is especially well supported by colleagues and governors who share her vision.
- As a clear reflection of its mission statement based on 'each child created in the image of God' the care and well-being of pupils has a very high priority. It impacts deeply and positively on personal development and on the consistently excellent progress made by all pupils from varied starting points.
- Pupil behaviour is exemplary and clearly linked to Christian teaching.

Areas to improve

- Take the opportunity provided by becoming part of the newly formed Riverside Federation to continue development as a church school by refreshing the school's Christian values for its next stage of development.
- Provide more planned opportunities within worship for pupils to develop a deeper appreciation of the Christian belief of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and of the Anglican practice of the use of different colours to signify different times of the Christian year.

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

The school proclaims the outworking of its Christian foundation as ensuring that 'our pupils learn to love learning, so that they can be the best they can be'. This is clearly linked to encouraging caring and compassion based on Christian teachings. The school's vision is based on the understanding that 'every child is created in the image of God'. Standards are variable given the small number of pupils admitted in each year group. However, the progress made by all groups from their varied starting points is consistently excellent. This links strongly with the school's Christian vision of being an inclusive, caring and outward-looking community that values the individual. Consequently, pupils are very well known and their various gifts and talents, as well as learning needs, are consistently taken into consideration. In turn this means that through effective teaching and strong pastoral support, pupils achieve extremely well across the school. Pupils' well-being is central to the school. It is a safe and happy place. This supports attendance which is high. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class and around the site. In those few instances where it is not, the school works effectively and collaboratively with parents to improve it. The school successfully supports its Christian mission through a programme called 'Values for Life'. This helps pupils explore key values such as friendship, kindness, forgiveness and justice. It supports the excellent opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) awareness that are evident through worship, religious education (RE) and across the curriculum. Current news items, identified on the 'Window on the World', board are addressed in class and through worship. This provides excellent opportunities for pupils' moral and social development. Very recently, and linked with the school's prayer space programme, which focused on children around the world, pupils have explored the plight of child labourers and the situation for children in Aleppo. This results in some moving and thoughtful prayers being offered by children of all ages. Bodiam's well-established link with a school in Malawi contributes strongly to pupils' awareness of others around the world and to issues of justice, charity and diversity. Charitable giving is recognised by both pupils and adults as a clear expression of the school's Christian and inclusive ethos. The worship programme and RE provide clear opportunities for pupils to develop their own spirituality, irrespective of their own or their family's faith or non-faith position. Pupils enjoy RE. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of diversity and difference in belief and practice. It provides some basic understanding of Christianity as a world faith through the topics covered. As one Key Stage 2 pupil reflected, 'In RE we learn about what people believe. This helps us understand and respect people who think differently. That is a good thing.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The very well planned and effectively delivered daily worship programme provides commendable opportunities for prayer and reflection. This supports spiritual and moral development excellently. Pupils and adults participate fully in worship and enjoy it. Through the programme various values are explored deeply within a Christian context. This means that pupils develop a detailed understanding of various Bible stories. As one pupil said, 'The Bible is God's word and it's important whether or not you believe it. It has some good teachings about how to live in it.' Through worship pupils also develop a clear understanding of the importance of Jesus for Christians and reflect on the significance of his teachings and parables for daily life. 'The Good Samaritan was told by Jesus to teach us to respect and care for everyone.' However, pupils' appreciation of the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is under-developed. Worship is seen by both adults and pupils as rightly being 'integral to school life'. Since the previous denominational inspection the school has improved its use of prayer and reflection areas in classrooms. Consequently, they are now well used and make an excellent contribution to helping pupils see the importance of prayer in daily life. Parents report, for example, that pupils talk about prayers said in class and are aware of the how praying for someone can help them 'because God listens'. In the academic year 2015-16 the school introduced the use of pop up prayer spaces. These are special areas set aside twice a year with a specific focus on prayer. They are appreciated by both pupils and staff. Some parents have joined their children in the prayer space as they have picked them up at the end of the school day. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer. It is displayed in the school hall, addressed during RE units of work and said or sung regularly during worship. This means that pupils have an age-appropriate and detailed knowledge of the prayer's significance and meaning. Pupils know that prayer is 'talking to God' and that through prayer Christians can seek 'forgiveness and ask God to help people in need'. Anglican aspects of worship are well-embedded in worship practice. This includes using the cross

as a focal point, lighting a candle to represent 'Jesus is God's light to the world' and using opening and closing sentences with responses. Pupils have a broad understanding of the rhythm of the Christian year through the celebration of various festivals including Harvest, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The use made by the church of different colours to signify different times of the Christian year is not well understood by pupils. The worship programme is properly enhanced through visits to the Church especially at festival times. This is continuing despite the recent death of the local vicar and the ensuing vacancy. Relationships are being built with other local clergy to support the school's worship programme. The school deals sensitively with issues of faith and belief. Pupils produced a pupils' reflection book which was given to the vicar's widow. This includes many references to his leading acts of worship and the impact that it had on pupils. The worship programme engages both adults and pupils in leading it and in monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. The recent introduction of the Barnabas group is already impacting positively on developments. These pupils, following the example of Barnabas, the encourager, are taking a lead in worship. Suggestions for improvement made by pupils are appropriately incorporated into the programme. For example, the school council suggested that Key Stage worship be introduced and this now happens one day per week as part of the varied programme of worship.

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

Leaders, including governors clearly articulate the school's deeply embedded Christian mission based on each child being a 'child of God'. This is a key driver in developments as a church school, the advancement of the previous informal partnership and the Riverside Federation. The new federated governing body is in its very early stages but throughout the lead up to formal changes has kept the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a voluntary controlled school clearly in its sights. The school is beginning a new phase in its development by being part of the federation. Leadership have rightly recognised that this provides a good opportunity to revisit the school's Christian vision and values as part of its continued development and growth as a church school. The headteacher and governors are giving a clear and perceptive lead in this. Leaders know their school well which enables detailed and accurate self-evaluation of its Christian service to the pupils and their families. The focus on Christian service expresses itself in very strong pastoral care and effective support for pupils' learning so that they make excellent progress whatever their background or ability level. The learning environment celebrates the school's Christian underpinning through colourful displays around school values and pupils' achievements. Staff are very well supported for working within a church school. There is, for example, regular input from the headteacher into staff training days explicitly linking priorities for school development to its Christian vision. Working in the partnership and now the federation is productive in sharing expertise and allowing staff to take responsibilities across two schools not usually afforded in such a small institution. The school works closely with a range of other voluntary controlled schools locally to support, develop and moderate work. This, for example, enables some shared planning and also supports accuracy of assessments through sharing ideas and work across the different schools. The relationship with the Diocese is satisfactory and with the parish church very good. Links with the local Baptist church as well as other Anglican churches enhance provision. Most pupils and families do not attend church regularly outside of their involvement with the school. However, parents are strongly supportive of the school's Christian foundation. They recognise the positive impact it has on their children's behaviour, attitudes and progress. Arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements and both areas are very well led and managed across the two schools in the federation. Excellent progress since the previous denominational inspection means that key issues for improvement have been effectively addressed.

SIAMS report [October 2016] [Bodiam CE (VC) Primary School, Robertsbridge, TN32 5UH