



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bishop Bell Church of England School

Priory Road, Eastbourne
BN23 7BL

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 17-18 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 9 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 114613

Headteacher: Mark Talbot

Inspector's name and number: Canon Linda Burton NS426

School context

Bishop Bell is a larger than average 11-16 mixed comprehensive school of 1040 pupils. Most pupils are of White British heritage. It was built to serve the poorest community in Eastbourne and has a 50:50 entrance policy; half the places are for the local community, half are the foundation (faith) categories. It is over-subscribed. The proportion of pupils eligible for additional pupil premium funding is 30%. The headteacher has been in post since September 2014. A new full time, ordained chaplain was appointed from September 2014. The school joins the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust in September 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Bell as a Church of England school are good

- Strong, insightful and effective Christian leadership has a significant and positive impact on pupils' achievement and well-being.
- The shared Christian values of the school are evident in all aspects of the relationships between pupils and staff.
- A shared interpretation of spirituality enables pupils to reflect on their understanding of spirituality and of its place in their lives.

Areas to improve

- Make more explicit the connection between the school's values and specific biblical teaching, in order to develop further the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- Include evidence of opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) in school lesson observation schedules, in order to strengthen the school's self-evaluation of its Christian ethos.
- Make a stronger commitment to religious education RE within the school, by increasing the amount of curriculum time given to RE in Key Stage 3 and encouraging higher numbers to take full course GCSE.

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

A revitalised, streamlined mission statement for the school was introduced when the current headteacher took up post in September 2014 and it underpins all of the school's policies and practices. It aims to place 'God's children at the heart of everything we do. Together we listen, learn, achieve'. Following the headteacher's appointment, Christian values were agreed upon by the whole school community. However, not all pupils are yet able to root these values in specific biblical teaching. All pupils in the school have equal, God-given value and the school is a happy, purposeful and thriving Christian community. Pupils, parents, staff and governors care greatly for each other. They comment on their feeling that the school is a family, and they relate this directly to its Christian ethos. Driven by the school's values, members of staff tailor their academic and pastoral support to the precise needs of individuals. The impact of this is seen in the school's GCSE outcomes, which are above the national average. The school is implementing with vigour and commitment a programme of interventions designed to close the gap between the progress made by disadvantaged students and that made by other students. Attendance has improved over the last three years. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved particularly, narrowing the gap with the attendance of other pupils. The school's behaviour management system promotes a restorative approach through its Turn Around Centre and ReStart provision. This system has resulted in rates of permanent and fixed-term exclusions which are well below national averages. The development of chaplaincy is of major significance in the life of the school. The new chaplain's role is an integral part of the Christian, pastoral and leadership work of the school. Supported by the senior leadership team he has led the development of a new shared interpretation of spirituality, and of Christian spirituality, by the whole school community. As a result of this innovative work, pupils are increasingly able to reflect on their understanding of spirituality and of its impact on their lives. All departments have analysed their contribution to Christian distinctiveness and are alert to providing opportunities for the SMSC development of pupils. Whilst departmental development plans and schemes of work reveal rich and diverse opportunities, school lesson observation forms do not yet reflect this. The school community has a well-developed social conscience, raising significant funds for local, national and global charities, including Kabubbu, an orphanage and village in Uganda. Staffing in RE has been strengthened this year. Consequently, the subject is able to make an increased contribution to the school's Christian character through the exploration of Christian concepts, and to pupils' understanding of and respect for other religions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school's new full time chaplain is well supported by the headteacher and the school's church school working group. In his short time in the school, considerable progress has been made in refreshing collective worship. A range of settings and styles of worship occur weekly and through them a distinctively Christian understanding of each term's chosen core value is explored. The seasons of the Church's year and Christian festivals are explored as part of the termly theme. Every pupil attends an act of school worship every week. This has a range of leaders and always has a Christian focus. Elements of Anglican liturgical practice can be found in this worship. In response to pupil feedback, pupil involvement in worship is increasing. A recent example is the school-wide art-based worship activities. Drama-led worship on the term's theme of resilience, created by pupils from Key Stage 3 drama clubs, was in its final rehearsals during the inspection. Developments have occurred in tutor group worship this year. The creation and introduction of the weekly chaplain's video has helped equip form tutors to lead worship with their tutor groups. It has also enabled all tutor groups to access high quality teaching, challenging questions, prayers and stimulus for reflection. Pupils are increasingly leading worship in their own tutor groups. Voluntary Eucharist is held regularly, and voluntary worship, held fortnightly, is increasing in popularity. Numbers attending the Christian Union have grown during this school year to the extent that it is now difficult for it to meet in the chapel. The chaplain has worked hard to increase understanding of the nature and purposes of prayer, for

example, in pupil diaries. Tutor room crosses have been introduced and these provide appropriate opportunities for all pupils to be more actively involved in personal reflection and prayer. Highly appropriate prayer cards in each tutor room provide an additional classroom resource; crosses and cards both help support tutors in leading worship. A staff prayer group meets weekly and a school community prayer group meets each term. A carol service is held each year in a local church. Since September 2015 pupils have become more involved in the systems established in the school for monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Following a period of staffing changes in the RE department since the previous inspection, a new head of department was appointed from September 2015, supported ably by a recently appointed Lead Practitioner for RE. These appointments strengthen the existing team of specialist RE teachers in the school. Currently almost all pupils receive less curriculum time in RE at Key Stage 3 than in other humanities subjects and, at Key Stage 4, RE is allocated less time than optional GCSE subjects. Curriculum development is well underway in Key Stages 3 and 4. A good balance has been achieved since September 2015 in the RE curriculum to reflect the school's Christian character. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain through the study of Christianity, and also Islam and Hinduism. Through this, pupils develop a secure understanding of Christianity and the other religions studied. There is a strong emphasis on the varied impact faith can have on the lives of believers. This enables pupils to engage well with questions of meaning and purpose and to develop a range of skills including enquiry, interpretation, evaluation and reflection. In these ways, RE makes a strong contribution to the SMSC development of pupils. Although almost all pupils take an accredited course at GCSE, in the last three years fewer than half have taken full course GCSE. Results in 2015 were a little lower than national standards both in terms of A*-C grades and the proportion of pupils accessing the higher grades. A smaller proportion of students achieved A*-C grades in RE than in English, Maths or Science at the school. Under the leadership of the new head of department, teaching and learning tasks in Key Stage 4 are closely focussed on examination-style questions and strategies. The department takes a full part in the whole school system to track pupil progress. It benefits from participation in the school's well-established monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The head of department is participating in the school's outstanding teacher programme, designed to enable good teachers to become consistently outstanding. All of these activities are directly leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

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

The school began a new era in its life as a church school with the appointment of the current headteacher in September 2014. His personal faith has driven all aspects of school improvement. There is a strong sense of team work in the school. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher, the other members of the senior leadership team and the governors, who are all united in their actions by a clear Christian vision. This has enabled the school's Christian character to advance considerably in the last eighteen months. In their evaluation of the school as a church school, senior leaders accurately judged that improvement and development was necessary in both collective worship and RE, and that effective leadership in each area was a priority. The significant progress made in both chaplaincy and RE has had direct impact on the Christian character of the school. All form tutors have undertaken training in leading collective worship. Partnerships with local churches and the other deanery partner schools are strong and proactive. Local clergy are regularly involved in a number of aspects of collective worship in the school and regular projects are undertaken between the five partner schools. Evidence confirms governors' skills in strategic planning and in their evaluation of school effectiveness, as well as their ability to provide support and challenge. Arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements. Most pupils leave school with some form of accreditation in RE, but curriculum time at Key Stage 3 does not meet the entitlement expectations of the National Society.