

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Beechwood Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Beechwood Road
Dudley
DY2 7QA

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Diocese	Worcester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Date of academy conversion	1 July 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	DRB Ignite Multi Academy Trust
Date of inspection	9 February 2017
Date of last inspection	28 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 142047
Executive headteacher Head of school	Kevin McCabe Hilary Wheeldon
Inspector's name and number	C. Ann Stone 812

School context

Beechwood CE Primary, formally St Edmund and St John Primary School, converted to a sponsored academy in July 2016. This followed seven years in an OFSTED category resulting in the removal of the senior leadership team. A new leadership team and a Interim Executive Board were appointed in July 2016 to lead and manage the school which has resulted in some changes in staffing and governorship. The school has 210 children on roll and is set in an urban location of high deprivation. The proportion of children entitled to Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs is above the national average and about one third of the children are from minority ethnic groups. One of the parish churches linked to the school is temporarily closed and the other without clergy.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Beechwood Primary School as a Church of England School are satisfactory.

- The leadership team have a clear vision and strategy for moving the school forward as a church school.
- The great value placed on respect and support for all stakeholders which impacts positively on the life of the school.
- The religious education lessons challenge children to think for themselves leading to good spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the newly introduced Christian values are deeply embedded within the whole life of the school which will have an impact on the lives of all members of the school community.
- Further develop the shared understanding of spirituality so that children are engaged in a range of spiritual experiences allowing them to deepen their own personal spirituality.
- Formalise the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship in order to ensure that children and governors are fully involved in the process.

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

Following a long period of instability the school now has a leadership team who have a clear action plan to move the school forward as a church school. Identified in the school development plan are clear action points to increase the Christian distinctiveness of the school. A new set of values have been discussed and agreed on by all stakeholders. The school recognises that once embedded they will enhance the children's understanding of Christian values and enable them to articulate them in relation to biblical teachings and real life experiences. The motto 'Living, loving, learning together' appears on the website and other documentation. One child explained that the motto was 'so we can learn to be a good person'. Children are less confident in their ability to link this to the understanding that all is possible with God's help.

Pastoral care for staff, children and parents is a significant strength of the school. Staff have been treated with compassion, honesty and respect during the difficult conversion to an academy. Parents appreciate the support given in times of family crisis and children know there is an 'open door policy' when they need help. The behaviour of the children is of the highest standard and relationships between children good. All of these can be directly attributed to the Christian character of the school.

Fundraising supports local, national and global charities. What still needs to be developed is how Christian values are at the heart of their fundraising. Supporting a child through the 'World Vision' charity is resulting in children appreciating and respecting global diversity. The school has links with the local community through the 'Jasmine Road Garden Project.' Linking this project to God's wonderful world will enable the development of awe and wonder in the children.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of spirituality and the school had identified the need for more opportunities within the curriculum to deepen this understanding, allowing them to make their own links between beliefs, practices and Christian values.

Parents and governors are welcomed in school and parents comment that the Christian values staff show to children contribute well to their behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.

Collective worship is important to the life of the school and is seen to contribute and support the school's Christian distinctiveness. It is planned using the 'Imaginer' series of books and major religious festivals in Christianity and other world faiths. Senior leaders and teaching staff lead worship and see it as a way to demonstrate their commitment as a team to promote the Christian values of the school. The parish priest occasionally led worship but has recently left the parish and the school recognises the need to involve visitors from the churches of St Edmund and St John, other local places of worship and the community to lead worship. A teaching assistant is now responsible to improve links with the local and other faith communities.

Children enjoy worship but there is limited evidence of the impact worship has on their daily lives. They are developing the ability to explain the differences between Christian values and the link these have to biblical material which will have an impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Symbolic Christian artefacts and a coloured cloth representing the colours of the church year are displayed on a worship table but children are not yet able to clearly articulate what they mean to Christians.

Links with the parish church community are limited mainly due to the closure of St Johns and the departure of the parish priest. However, the church is still used to celebrate the major festivals of Christmas and Easter. The introduction of more visits to church would be significant in acknowledging church as a special place and where children could develop their sense of awe and wonder. All classrooms have a 'multi faith area' which celebrates the faiths of all the children and contains bibles, faith symbols, artefacts, prayer bags or bears.

The children recognise the 'Lords Prayer' and it is used in some acts of worship but not with a great degree of understanding. Other prayers are used during the school day and the younger children are confident using a 'Prayer Bear' to help them focus their thoughts. Children are beginning to understand the importance of prayer in their own lives. Collective worship includes the teachings of Jesus Christ and children are able to talk about him with a good degree of understanding. They have a developing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but are not yet able to make the links between the Bible and lessons for their own lives. Children have no understanding of the Eucharist and the importance it plays in the lives of Christians.

Recently introduced are 'worship journals' where children write about the content of collective worship. A more formal method of monitoring and evaluation of collective worship needs to be established which will identify where improvement is needed and help to inform planning. Identified by the school is the need for children to be more involved in the planning, monitoring, delivering and evaluation of worship. This will ensure that children begin to take more responsibility and become confident to plan and lead worship thus increasing the impact it has on all

learners.

Parents are invited to attend church services and achievement worship in school and value these opportunities.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

The school has clearly acknowledged the importance of religious education (RE) and it has a high profile within the curriculum. It is recognised by staff, governors, parents and children as being important to the life of the school. Children enjoy their lessons and are able to link their learning to how they should live their lives. Parents remark how often children talk about their RE lessons and, in particular, their understanding of faiths other than their own. The RE subject leader is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and attends diocesan training. She ensures standards are high, lessons challenging and has provided training for staff where appropriate. The school has identified the need to formalise lesson observations, undertake learning walks and the scrutiny of work books. Following consultation with the Interim Executive Board (IEB) the school has identified the need to implement the Worcester Diocesan Agreed Syllabus enabling the school to introduce a more focussed approach to the teaching of religious education and more involvement with diocesan training and support.

Staff plan RE lessons which allow children the opportunity to reflect, ask questions, offer opinions and help understand the impact religion has on believers. Children actively engage in their learning and are beginning to recognise the contribution it makes to their spiritual, moral and social development.

The understanding of Christianity is secure although the need to develop their understanding of Christianity has been identified by the school and the implementation of the 'Understanding Christianity' project is intended to address this. Opportunities are given for children to learn about other faiths through sharing experiences, direct teaching and visits to other places of worship. An example seen was Year One Muslim children confidently talking about and demonstrating how they pray. As a result, children's knowledge and understanding of cultures and faiths which are different to their own is of a high standard.

Progress and achievement of all children is tracked and evidence shows that the majority of children are making good progress. The governor responsible for RE is involved in informal monitoring and evaluating but a more formal system needs to be introduced to ensure there is clear understanding of the school's performance, distinctiveness and future development.

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

The inspirational leadership team show vision and commitment for the development of the school as a church school and are now in a position to develop staff to enable the school to improve. They have already demonstrated exceptional focus and determination to build a confident team, empower staff and release their potential. The understanding of the leadership team of how Christian values make a difference ensure they are at the heart of all areas of development

The Interim Executive Board know the school and articulate well the understanding of their role as strategic leaders. Not yet secure is the understanding of their role as strategic leaders of a church school although they do have an understanding of the SIAMS framework. Acknowledged by the IEB and leadership team is the fact the school is the only church school in the multi academy trust. They consider this an advantage and plan that the Christian distinctiveness of Beechwood Primary School can be shared with the other academy schools in the future. The IEB have little experience in monitoring and evaluating the school's distinctive Christian character and have identified this as an area for development.

Parents know their views are welcomed and valued and state the ability to speak to the headteacher or a senior member of staff ensure that any problems are dealt with sensitively and immediately.

The development of staff as leaders in this church school is achieved through individual support, attendance at diocesan training, and support of each other. School leaders and the IEB ensure both worship and RE meet the statutory requirements.

Due to the obstacles and challenges the school has faced over the last seven years the 'Areas for Development' from the previous inspection have only partially been achieved.

The supportive relationships between all members of the school community are clearly rooted in Christian values and will enable the school to implement new strategies to lead the school to one which will become both distinctive and highly effective.