

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Barwell Church of England Academy

High Street, Barwell, Leicestershire. LE9 8DS	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Leicester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date of academy conversion	November 2012
Date/s of inspection	14 June 2017
Date of last inspection	12 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Junior Academy 138965
Headteacher	Victoria Newman
Inspector's name and number	Wendy Wakefield 867

School context

Barwell Church of England Academy serves the village of Barwell. There are currently 260 children on roll. Most children join the school having attended the local infant school. The number of pupils in receipt of pupil premium and identified as SEN are both slightly above the national average. The school converted to a single academy in November 2012 and works collaboratively as part of the Affinity Teaching School Alliance. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The current headteacher has been in post since April 2015 and a new senior leadership team has been established since the last inspection.

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

- The strong leadership and high level commitment of the headteacher, alongside the successful partnership with the local parish church, has resulted in Barwell's foundation as a church school being fully secured.
- The development of a core set of six values chosen by the whole school community has completely transformed the ethos of the school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how they impact on their personal development and it is clearly reflected in the positive approach to learning.
- Worship is central to the spiritual life of the school. It is sincere, varied and relevant, and provides spiritual refreshment for the whole school community.
- Relationships in the school are very strong. The caring support given to pupils and staff extends to all stakeholders and stems from the school's Christian vision of 'becoming the best version of ourselves'.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen pupils' knowledge that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith, by introducing a greater range of visits and visitors to enhance provision.
- To provide greater opportunity for all pupils to systematically plan and lead acts of worship in order that they become true partners in leading the faith community.
- Ensure that all governors engage in the process of evaluating church school development by implementing rigorous and robust formal systems to regularly check and account for its progress.

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

The development and profile of key Christian values has been the main driver in promoting the Christian ethos and learning environment of this school. Pupils and adults can articulate the significant difference the values make to their lives and as a result, Barwell is a warm harmonious community with exemplary behaviour and a positive outlook to learning. The school's distinctively Christian ethos is realised by all stakeholders who speak positively about the opportunities and nurturing environment provided. Staff are totally committed to meeting the needs of every individual in a strong Christian environment and describe the school as 'an extended family where everybody supports and cares for each other without question.' One parent commented 'I always feel welcome at the school and I know that I could come in at any time if I had a problem. My child is really happy here.' The vision for every member of the school community to 'become the best version' of themselves has also led to good academic progress and pupils who are keen to come to school. Attendance is at least as good as the national average because of the care and support provided to children and families.

The development of spirituality has been a priority and this has been championed by Reverend Philip the local incumbent who is a frequent presence at school and is described by staff as 'a crucial member of the team'. The introduction of 'Thoughtful Friday', and parting thoughts to end every act of worship have given pupils more opportunities to explore and reflect on the 'big questions' of life. This was evidenced well on the day in a Year 5 RE lesson where pupils were considering how best to live their lives and what would be most important as Christians. One pupil felt it was of paramount importance as a Christian to follow Jesus because 'He sets a great example to us on how to live a good life and do the best we can.' Pupils are really keen and enjoy contributing their views. They are able to give insightful reflections on a range of subjects and link them to the teachings of Jesus. One child was able to define trust by relating it to the story of Jesus walking on water saying 'if you don't trust you will always be worried and afraid.'

Pupils enjoy a broad, rich curriculum which is creative and interactive and one which enhances SMSC provision. This is enriched by attractive displays which often link to Christian values. They show a high level of respect when talking about other faiths and are developing an understanding of the diversity and difference between other faith communities. However, with the majority of pupils at the school being from White British families, direct contact with visitors from other cultures and faiths is limited, as are opportunities for the school to develop links across the world. The RE subject leader ensures standards are high and lessons are challenging. Children are able to speak eloquently and enthusiastically about their learning ensuring that RE impacts well on the school's Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and a time for pupils and staff to come together to learn, reflect, pray, sing and communicate their thoughts with one another and with God. It is a springboard for learning about Christian values and biblical teaching. Parents say, 'Our children come home and tell us about the Bible stories they have heard and then act them out.' The parish church is used to celebrate major Christian festivals and important school events which are supported well by parents and governors, thereby enhancing the school's distinctive Christian character. Acts of worship have enabled pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the seasons and liturgical colours of the Church's calendar as well deepening their understanding of the Lord's Prayer. Children speak with confidence about the way in which worship shapes their thoughts and actions. A gathering prayer and the symbolic lighting of a candle is effective in welcoming everyone into the assembly hall each day and encompasses their knowledge of the Holy Trinity. Children clearly value the importance of God as father and son but an understanding of God as Holy Spirit is less well developed. Planning for collective worship is detailed and all staff take ownership of this. A range of worship leaders from both the school and local church deliver worship. A very enjoyable re-enactment of the story of Jacob and Esau by the 'Open the Book' team during the inspection, cleverly reinforced the Christian value of forgiveness. An excellent relationship between the team and pupils was clearly evident at the end of this as the children offered 'high fives' and grateful thanks when exiting the hall.

Children understand the value of personal prayer and use the 'prayer tree' regularly to enhance their spiritual journey. Some of the children's prayers show insight and maturity in their reflections. More recently prayers have reflected the terrible events in London and Manchester and showed a real empathy and desire for peace in the world as well as true compassion for those involved. There are designated areas for reflection round the school where children and adults alike enjoy taking time out to sit and think about both personal and global issues or to quietly pray. The children are particularly excited about the current development of a new spiritual garden.

Pupils enjoy being involved in the evaluation of collective worship. They say that they enjoy the opportunity to share their views with the staff and feel that their opinions really matter. They are given special time to do this in one of the spiritual areas where subdued lighting and music enhance reflection. Whilst there is some evidence showing that pupils are planning and leading collective worship, opportunities are limited. Pupils reported that they would like to do this more often and more independently. Parents have the opportunity to make comment about acts of worship they have attended and many have written very positively in the special book provided for this purpose. Following evaluation by the collective worship subject leader, Reverend Philip was asked to lead a staff meeting to enable further embedding of Anglican tradition into daily acts of worship.

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

The passionate and aspirational leadership of the headteacher, along with the unwavering support of her senior leadership team and staff, has ensured that every aspect of the school's effectiveness as a church school has been addressed. As a team, they are determined that every pupil will be 'happy, confident and successful' and that all members of the school community will 'become the best version of themselves,' by following the example set by Jesus Christ. This is well facilitated by a committed governing body, highly supportive parish church and all members of the school community (including pupils) who have invested a great deal of time and energy in realising the school's Christian vision.

The relationship between the school, parish church and local community is strong and is characterised by a mutual respect and genuine sense of togetherness. Through varied community experiences children understand the need and have the ability to empathise with others. When remembering those who had died in war, pupils were joined by community members for a period of silence. A silhouette, covered in handmade poppies made by the children, is to be used in the future during services of remembrance at the church.

Leaders at all levels are eloquent about the importance of the school's distinctively Christian vision and the six Christian values for the pupils in their care. This in turn enables all stakeholders to live out the vision to the full. They are clear about what needs to be done to secure their ambitious aims for the school, and are proactive in implementing changes. A high priority is given to Christian distinctiveness across the school, collective worship and RE, which has led to sustained improvement since the last inspection. Because of this, pupils throughout the school readily speak about the Christian values of the school and the difference that Barwell being a 'church school' makes to their lives. The partnership with the parish church is of mutual benefit to both the church and school, this along with passionate and determined subject leadership have led to the noted improvements in both collective worship and RE. The vicar regularly visits the school, not just to lead worship, but to lead staff meetings. This is having a notable impact on staff confidence and subject knowledge. Staff at all levels access training to develop their teaching and leadership skills and senior staff have accessed training for church school leadership. Plans to include middle management in this training are in place to help to secure future leaders both for this school and for the wider Diocese. The school has effective systems in place for monitoring and evaluation and governors offer challenge and support. However, formal systems for more regular monitoring of Barwell's distinctiveness as a church school are limited.

All development points from the last inspection have been met.

SIAMS report June 2017 Barwell Church of England Academy Barwell Leicestershire LE9 8DS