



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Quarry Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2EY

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Date of inspection: 26 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 23 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 118724

Headteacher: Moira Duncombe

Inspector's name and number: Anne Southgate 820

School context

St Barnabas is a smaller than average sized primary school. It serves a varied catchment area, with significant pockets of deprivation. The pupils are from predominantly white British backgrounds with a significant minority from eastern Europe. Progress is above average for all groups of pupils. There are close ties with the local Anglican church. The school is over-subscribed after several years of being undersubscribed. There has been a period of turbulence in leadership, but recent appointments have resulted in a settled staffing situation.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Barnabas as a Church of England school are good

- The headteacher's belief that "all are uniquely created and loved by God" results in a church school which enables all pupils to make progress.
- The partnership with the parish church is highly effective.
- The capacity for improvement as a church school is strong.

Areas to improve

- Establish an effective assessment system in religious education (RE) to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Ensure consistently good teaching of RE throughout the school.
- Develop pupil leadership and the monitoring of collective worship.

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

The school has clearly identified the Christian values of love, trust, perseverance, compassion and reconciliation. These are understood by most of the school community to originate from Jesus' teaching. These values are clear in the school's documentation, which addresses an issue from the previous SIAS inspection. The shared belief that every child is uniquely created and loved by God, has resulted in effective improvement strategies. This means that nearly all pupils make good progress, and that support for individual needs is strong. Christian values

shape decision making, for example, by using the value of compassion when considering whether to authorise absence. Pupils are able to make connections between their behaviour and the school's Christian values. They talk confidently about relationships being restored through reconciliation and love. One child was overheard telling his friend that he shouldn't use the word "hate", as God loves everyone. Parents remark that their children reflect on the school's values at home. This leads to strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, and to respect for the views of those who have different beliefs from themselves. The strong values result in a school which is happy and welcoming. The Christian vision and values are relatively new. Whilst they are embedded in the day to day life of the school, they are not always the foundation for all of the school's policies. RE has an important place in the school and is valued by all. However, RE is inconsistently taught across the school. This means that not all pupils are able to make expected progress in RE.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is valued highly by the whole school community. Adults and children are actively engaged, and a sense of enjoyment is apparent. Pupils and parents speak enthusiastically about regular school Masses held in the parish church. The school's Christian values frequently form the theme for worship. Pupils are able to relate their reflection in acts of worship to their lives, and often discuss this with their parents. Regular prayers punctuate the school day. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning, behaviour and spiritual development. Reflection on the themes of collective worship often leads to action. For example, the school council requested that the school should send Bibles to children in Uganda. Collective worship reflects the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the parish church. Pupils also experience other Christian traditions as the curate from a nearby evangelical church sometimes leads worship, and pupils have visited a charismatic church. As a result, pupils have an excellent knowledge of Christian beliefs and practices. Their understanding of beliefs, such as God as three persons in one, is particularly impressive for their age. Pupils sometimes lead prayers in acts of worship, but do not have sufficient opportunities to plan and lead collective worship. A very small number of non-Christians are withdrawn from collective worship. Whilst the school is seeking ways to offer these pupils alternative ways to develop spiritually during this time, this is not currently in place. Monitoring of collective worship is informal. The school recognises that a more structured pattern of monitoring and evaluation would lead to further improvement.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is satisfactory

The previous SIAS inspection identified the need to improve teaching in RE. Current standards are in line with national expectations and most pupils make good progress. However, this is inconsistent throughout the school. Younger pupils learn more effectively, because of the good teaching in these classes. In the best lessons, questioning is skilful and enables pupils to reflect and to develop their thinking. For example, Early Years pupils were helped to make the link between God creating the world and the consequent need for us to look after it. RE is given a high status within the school. This is aided by the creation of an RE team, which includes the very active involvement of the parish priest. The curriculum enables pupils to learn about and learn from Christianity and other major world religions. Pupils readily relate their learning in RE to the school's values and to collective worship. The RE team have accessed diocesan training about 'big questions'. This has enthused and motivated them to improve RE teaching throughout the school. The new RE leader has generated an excitement about RE amongst the teaching staff. She is aware of the need to implement an effective assessment system, which is not currently in place. Feedback in pupils' books is inconsistent and does not always help pupils to improve their work. The excellent work of the new RE leader has resulted in a clear vision, and effective strategies to secure improvement. The capacity for further improvement is strong, but the RE leader has not had time to make a significant impact.

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

The school has experienced a period of considerable turbulence in leadership since the last inspection. There is now a settled leadership with clear improvement strategies. The new headteacher is securing rapid improvement. She has established a happy, welcoming school, where all are valued. This is a result of her belief that “all are uniquely created and loved by God”. Her swift actions and clear Christian vision ensure a positive impact on achievement and wellbeing. All stakeholders are consulted, and their feedback is used in self-evaluation as a church school. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The headteacher has given RE and collective worship a high priority. Considerable time and resources are invested in these areas. Planning for improvement is effective. Regular staff training focuses on the development of RE and on strengthening the Christian character of the school. This enables all staff to develop as leaders of church schools. There is an extremely positive relationship with the parish church and priest, who cares passionately about the school. Parents and pupils speak highly of his involvement and ambition to improve the school. For example, one parent commented, “I am very happy that my child goes to a school with such a strong and nurturing relationship with the church”. The partnership with the church benefits both the school and the church. It has led to a unified desire to serve the local community. In a short time, the new leadership of the school has brought about significant improvements in developing St Barnabas as a church school.

SIAMS report June 2015 St Barnabas CE School, Tunbridge Wells, TNI 2EY