

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

East Brent C of E Academy	
Church Road, East Brent, Highbridge, Somerset TA9 4HZ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Bath and Wells
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 November 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	The Wessex Learning Trust
Date of inspection	23 February 2017
Date of last inspection	27 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled First School 143331
Headteacher	Fiona Robertson
Inspector's name and number	Rupert Kaye (906)

School context

This is a smaller than average First school situated in the Parish of Three Saints, near Highbridge. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and those for whom English is an additional language are below national averages. The school is part of The Wessex Learning Trust, which includes eight schools across the Cheddar Valley. The headteacher has been in post since September 2016 and is responsible for leading and managing two schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of East Brent C of E Academy as a Church of England school are good

- A dynamic ethos committee ensures Christian values are embedded in the daily life of the school and impact positively on pupils' personal development and well-being, underpinning high-quality relationships and encouraging excellent behaviour.
- A vibrant 'lived theology' of restorative justice is evident in the day-to-day practice of pupils' approach to apology, forgiveness and conflict resolution.
- A well-developed ongoing international link with a school in Kenya helps pupils comprehend Christianity as a worldwide faith, encompassing other cultures.
- The many and varied opportunities provided through collective worship enable pupils to develop the skills of prayer and reflection.

Areas to improve

- Increase pupils' understanding of and participation in worship through regular opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate their own and other acts of collective worship.

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

East Brent C of E Academy is a supportive and inclusive Christian learning community which lives up to its maxim: 'Inspiring Learning for Life.' The school is good at providing for all its learners: academically, socially and spiritually. Disadvantaged pupils and minority groups are well supported, make good progress and achieve well.

Religious education (RE) contributes positively to the Christian character of the school. Pupils of all ages are able to relate what they have learned in RE to their lives and their deepening understanding of the wider world. RE nurtures an understanding of and respect for difference and diversity, and makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. A well-developed ongoing international school link has enabled Key Stage 2 pupils to correspond with pupils at a Christian school in Kenya. As a result, pupils now understand that Christianity is a worldwide faith, encompassing other cultures. Consequently, pupils are able to talk respectfully about similarities and differences between the two school communities. Key Stage 2 RE visits to a mosque and a synagogue will provide pupils with further opportunities to develop an understanding of, and respect for, people of different faiths and backgrounds. Pupils from Reception onwards are taught about the importance of respect for all faiths and cultures and British values including tolerance and mutual respect for the beliefs of others. Through using play figures representing racial diversity and hearing stories from around the world, Reception pupils learn that all people are equal and are loved by God.

Pupils recognise the school as a church school and are able to link values to their own 'good choices'. When asked how a visitor would know that East Brent is a church school, pupils answer in terms of the many Christian virtues and values that shape the school community. Christian values, in line with the two-year rolling programme, are celebrated on displays in the school hall and classroom prayer and reflection areas. Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) and British values are also displayed prominently around the school. Older pupils link the 'rights' and 'responsibilities' set out in their own class charter to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In turn, class charters encourage pupils to 'show respect to everyone' and 'give them a chance to change'. Pupils are taught to respond to a 'proper apology' by saying 'I forgive you, but I don't want you to do that again.' They explain that assertiveness and forgiveness go hand in hand. The school's Christian values make a positive contribution to behaviour, which is good.

The school's Christian distinctiveness influences pupil's personal development and well-being, and underpins the high-quality relationships evident within the school community. Pupils and adults treat each other with respect. Parents attribute good pupil behaviour to both the school's distinctive Christian ethos and character, and the high expectations of the headteacher and staff. The caring Christian ethos means that pupils enjoy coming to school and levels of attendance are good. Where there is an issue, individual pupils and their families are well supported.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

There is a clear sense that collective worship is a valued and important part of each day. Pupils respond positively and participate willingly in acts of collective worship, talking enthusiastically about what they have experienced. They enjoy worship times together and are able to relate what they have learnt in collective worship to their own lives, choices and actions. Daily collective worship themes are based on Christian values as well as SEAL, British values and UNCRC and often include Bible stories about Jesus. Because of this, pupils can retell some of the parables. They are able to relate Christian values such as love and compassion to Bible stories such as the Good Samaritan. Regular family-friendly Messy Church times in school and the parish church are enjoyed by pupils and parents. Worship times have inspired pupils to take responsibility for helping other people, even those they do not know, by supporting a range of charitable organisations.

Whole-school collective worship takes place in the school hall and in the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, marking the seasons and festivals in the liturgical calendar. The rector is a regular visitor to the school, leading collective worship and supporting RE. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of Christianity and some Anglican practices. Collective worship provides opportunities to explore the Christian concept of the Trinity. Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils can explain that the lighting of three candles represents God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Evidence from the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship indicates that pupils understand the important place that Jesus holds for Christians.

During collective worship, pupils join in spontaneously with songs and prayers. Pupils contribute their own written or extempore prayers during collective worship. Collective worship ends with an invitation for all present to respond in both deed and thought. Pupils talk about feeling 'inspired' to 'make better choices' at school and at home. Others feel 'challenged' to write a prayer in response to a particular collective worship theme. Some of these prayers are then captured in a 'Prayer and Thoughts' book, others are displayed for the whole school community to see on a 'Tree of Hope' in the school hall or on a playground noticeboard. This happens because adults in school skilfully create physical, temporal and emotional spaces which allow and encourage pupils to pause, reflect and explore their own thoughts. Hence, pupils' spirituality in general, and prayer and reflection in particular, are integral to the everyday rhythms of school life.

These prayers and reflections provide evidence of the impact that collective worship has on the Christian distinctiveness of attitudes, behaviour choices and relationships. Pupils of all ages talk with understanding about the meaning and importance of the Lord's Prayer. What is lacking, though, is sufficient opportunity for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate their own and other acts of collective worship.

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

Leaders, including governors, are keen to strengthen the school's Christian purpose, direction, distinctiveness and effectiveness as a member of The Wessex Learning Trust. An ethos committee, including foundation governors, RE leader and rector from each of the headteacher's two schools (East Brent C of E Academy and Lymsham C of E Academy), ensures that the school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. The committee oversees formal systems for monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality, effectiveness and impact of RE and collective worship. The minutes of the ethos committee meetings also evidence the broader role that governors play in keeping biblical values at the heart of the school's vision and aims.

Leaders are inspired by a shared conviction that 'all children have a right to reach their full potential'. Hence they are committed to ensuring all groups of pupils are well supported, make good progress and achieve well. Leaders have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing over time. They recognise the importance of providing pupils with opportunities to learn about and feel connected with local, national and global communities. The involvement, commitment and support of the rector, has energised a reciprocal relationship between school and parish. This has had a positive impact on the worship life of each. The local church provides support for the school both practically and spiritually. For example, RE lessons regularly take place in, and make full use of, the parish church building. One such lesson took place on the day of the SIAMS inspection. This partnership with the parish church, along with the school's involvement in a range of village events, helps to firmly root children into their local community. However, leaders also work hard to ensure pupils have opportunities to broaden their horizons. For this reason the school is represented at diocesan events including the annual 'Pilgrim Day' for Year 4 pupils at Wells Cathedral. The event helps Year 4 pupils to see their forthcoming move up to middle school as the next step on a lifelong journey of faith. East Brent's link with a school in Kenya is valued by leaders as a way of preparing children for a purposeful life in a diverse world.

Parents speak highly of the school's positive influence on their own children. On the day of the inspection, parents came into school to express their enthusiasm and support for the school's Christian leadership, ethos and character. Productive relationships between parents and the school are also apparent in the work of the Friends of East Brent School.

Leaders have developed a good grasp of what 'Christian distinctiveness' means. The school's Christian vision and aims are visible in every room in the school building and on the playground noticeboard, with a child-speak version in every classroom. Consequently, all stakeholders have read the school's Christian vision and aims. All know the school maxim: 'Inspiring Learning for Life.'

Recent training with the diocese has equipped governors to have a clear impact on the school's work by providing the appropriate amount of challenge to school leaders. Likewise, training for subject leaders has also had a positive impact on pupil outcomes.

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