

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### **Bussage Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

The Ridgeway, Bussage, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL6 8FW

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Gloucester</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Gloucester
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date of inspection	25 January 2017
Date of last inspection	22 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 115678
Headteacher	Andrew Ferguson
Inspector's name and number	Daphne Spitzer No 37

#### **School context**

Bussage Church of England Primary School is a one form entry school with 203 children on roll. It serves the village of Bussage and nearby communities. The proportion of children with special education needs and /or physical disabilities (SEND) is below the national average as is the proportion eligible to receive the pupil premium grant. The majority of children are from White British heritage families. The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education supporting other schools in the area. With the support of the new parish priest, relationships between the church and school have been re-energised in recent times.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bussage VA as a Church of England school are good**

- The substantial role of the Values Ambassadors in promoting the school's Christian character has a good impact on the lives of the whole school community.
- The outstanding relationships promoted by the school's Christian values, and particularly friendship, have a strong impact on children's personal development and well-being.
- The strong partnership between the school and church communities is enhancing the school's distinctive Christian character for the mutual benefit of all involved.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Review and revise the school's Christian vision ensuring it is central to all decision making, in order to raise the effectiveness of its Christian character
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's Christian character, using the whole community, in order to ensure it is effective and distinctive
- Enhance class reflective areas by promoting greater interaction in order to increase opportunities to develop personal spirituality
- Enable children to develop an understanding of the Trinity as well as some aspects of Anglican tradition and practice in order that they fully appreciate the Church of England character of the school

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

Bussage is a friendly and welcoming community where Christian values permeate daily life. The school's Christian ethos creates a secure and inclusive environment in which all children are cherished and grow in confidence and self-esteem. As a result, children enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. The school's values, rooted in Christian teaching are having a positive impact on children's academic achievement. This is evident in the way children talk about their understanding of the need to persevere, just as 'God did when he created the world.' Christian values have a very positive impact on children's personal development and well-being. Consequently, behaviour and relationships between children and all members of the school community are outstanding. Children talk warmly of the value of friendship and refer to the school as a family, regarding each other as sisters and brothers. The school's thematic curriculum is exciting and innovative. Staff have a shared understanding of spirituality and opportunities to develop this are planned carefully into the curriculum. The way the school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is very effective because it is rooted in the school's Christian values. Both of these strands are interwoven strongly in the school's thematic curriculum. A spiritual garden recently enhanced by artworks and sculptures has been created by children. It now has a prominent role within the school grounds and is regarded with pride as promoting a quiet place to reflect on their values. The central importance of religious education (RE) in promoting the school's distinctive Christian character is evident in the way children talk about how the Bible provides 'lessons for life'. A link with a school in Kenya is effective because the children regard this diverse community as part of their circle of friends. Children demonstrate respect, tolerance and acceptance of people of other faiths. These are values which underpin British society.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship is an important time in the daily life at Bussage. Both staff and children recognise its special role in promoting the school's distinctive Christian values. The school's Christian ethos is lived out by the whole community in the way they show God's love by supporting one another. This was reflected explicitly when the Christian value of courage was promoted from the Biblical text 'perfect love casts out all fear'. In the open and secure setting created by worship, children and adults are able to share their fears and know that they can ask for God's love to give them courage to overcome these fears. Christian values are integral to the planning of worship and the Christian message that is promoted. For instance, this is reflected in the way the focus table is known as the values table. Children understand that they come together and light a candle to signify Christ's role as the 'light of the world'. However, although the Trinity is included in the opening greeting, children's understanding of this is limited as is their understanding of Anglican practice. Worship is planned very effectively by the RE subject leader, deputy head and vicar, thus providing good support for those who lead. Music is a key part of worship and songs, often uplifting, are carefully selected to complement the themes. A time of prayer and guided reflection is also effective in promoting spiritual development. Display boards promote the current value within classes. However these are not always effective in developing a sense of personal spirituality because they are not consistently interactive, inviting responses from children. A large group of mixed age children, known as the Values Ambassadors play an important role in planning and leading worship for Key Stage 1 children. This last year, their role has been further enhanced by leading whole school worship with parents at festival times. They meet regularly with the RE leader, providing their evaluations of worship as well as sharing reflections. In this way, the ambassadors are learning leadership skills and a strong sense of ownership of collective worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Standards in RE for the majority of children are at least in line with national expectations and often higher. This is because teaching is good as verified by the subject leader's monitoring. Progress between key stages is also good as seen by the tracking of children's learning over the last few years. Teaching methods make good use of key questions and thinking skills and are lively and interactive. The curriculum is engaging, exciting and relevant to children's needs. It is taught discretely, as special RE days, as well as part of the thematic curriculum. Children talk with interest of their understanding of the Christian value of courage. They recognise the courage shown by refugees from their learning about Mary and Joseph when they were refugees, during their time in Egypt. This is an example of how the curriculum promotes a good understanding of Christian values and enhances its relevance by relating it to the modern day world. Children can identify with the feelings of others, such as the fear of the disciples before Jesus calmed the storm. Children show good interest in other faiths. This was seen when children used their understanding of Christianity to describe the call to prayer as being 'like church bells'. The comment that these sounds are 'creating space in your head' is an example of the quality of spiritual awareness developed by RE. The capable and enthusiastic subject leader has been appointed since the last inspection. She ensures that the subject has a prominent role in the school curriculum. This is evident in the way that learning is now assessed and marked rigorously in line with other core subjects. She has carried out a thorough audit of the subject identifying strengths and actions to address areas for development. Governors are supportive and involved at a strategic level in the implementation of the new resource 'Understanding Christianity'.

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

Bussage has a clear vision which reflects its Christian foundation. This is well supported by the Christian values that are effectively promoted through collective worship. Over the last few years this vision has served the school well in providing direction for the school's distinctive Christian character. However, school leaders believe that it does not now meet the school's needs nor proclaim the school's distinctive Christian character in the way they would like. As a result, school leaders have decided to review and revise the vision statement. Self-evaluation strategies are very effective. However they are mainly led by the RE subject leader with evaluations from the Values Ambassadors and school leadership team with minimal input from governors. The recently renamed curriculum and ethos committee has a good overview of the school's Christian character. The development of values and spiritual awareness in the thematic curriculum and the preparation for the implementation of the new RE resource 'Understanding Christianity' are good examples of successful church school initiatives over the last two years. Regular meetings led by the vicar and the RE subject leader with other leaders in local church schools have a good impact and effectively complement the work of the governors. Governors' commitment to the school's Christian foundation is apparent in the effective way that the issues from the last inspection have been addressed. Relations with the diocese are good. Their support during difficult times a few years ago has been much appreciated. Professional development for staff is given high priority and is used to good effect. During the extended parish vacancy the headteacher established valuable weekly contributions from local church leaders and members of the church community as visitors to lead collective worship. Since the appointment of the vicar relationships have been re-established between the church and school communities. As a result, the partnership is now strong. The vicar's contribution to the school has had a profound impact over the last few years. For example, by forming the Open the Book team for weekly school worship with the support of local church members. The school hosts monthly parish church services and the popular Messy Church has been established. It is the venue for the current 'Alpha' course. Bussage school and its parish church are now cohesive communities, working together for the mutual benefit of all. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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