

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Benedict Biscop Church of England Academy

Marcross Drive, Moorside, Sunderland. SR3 2RE	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Durham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 February 2012
Name of multi-academy trust	Northern Lights Learning Trust
Date/s of inspection	30 March 2017
Date of last inspection	12, 13 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Church of England Academy 137831
Principal	Paula Thompson
Inspector's name and number	Alan Baker 903

School context

Benedict Biscop CE Academy is an average sized primary school with nursery provision. It has recently moved to multi-academy trust status and is actively seeking to recruit other schools to the trust. The majority of pupils have English as their first language and are of White British backgrounds. The percentage of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs is low in comparison to national averages. As lead school in a teaching alliance it serves young people from three to nineteen years of age. The school has gained several national awards for leadership allowing it to support other schools and trainee teachers.

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

- Forward thinking partnerships are continually creating new opportunities for the school to support other Christian educational organisations, passing on the values and ethos which makes the school so effective.
- Clear and compassionate leadership allows many staff to develop and grow into effective church school leaders.
- The Christian character of the school supports an inclusive, respectful environment where children can fulfil their potential.
- The school articulates a wide variety of Christian values that support relationships and achievements.
- Inspirational RE leadership continues to develop outstanding and creative teaching and learning.
- Committed and knowledgeable clergy deliver distinctively Christian worship for all pupils and the wider school community.
- The Christian character of the school impacts on the ability of pupils and staff to describe their own spiritual journey.

Areas to improve

- Deepen pupils' exploration of other faiths and beliefs in the local community.
- Bring the strengths of pupils' spirituality and leadership from smaller worship environments into the larger, weekly community worship.
- Ensure the strong Christian vision continues to guide leaders as they forge the exciting, future direction of this Church school.

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

The school vision statement that all pupils 'realise their potential, aspiring to excellence in all aspects of life, in the light of the Christian faith' drives this very successful school. Staff of the school live out this vision so that aspirations for each individual are of paramount importance. They describe being part of a team where the children are 'at the heart of a common vision'. Christian values create a supportive environment where pupils' achievement is dramatically above those of similar schools nationally. Pupils are eager to articulate the many values which allow them to be successful in their studies and happy in their relationships. The example of Jesus is central to the way they put these values into action and understand how to be the best they can be. Pupils articulate the importance of the values in supporting their actions and relationships. They speak with enthusiasm about how religious education (RE) and worship support them to live out a great variety of values.

The ethos of the school is evident in the exemplary behaviour and positive relationships on show, supported by a wide range of national initiatives such as 'Rights Respecting Schools' and 'Kids safe'. Pupils convincingly discuss how these initiatives, combined with their Christian values and bible teachings help them value themselves and others. One pupil commented that children are encouraged to 'make values real in their everyday lives'. Involvement in many exchange initiatives has created worldwide partnerships which gives pupils the opportunity to develop their understanding of world diversity and difference. Parents appreciate the way in which children use their values to resolve their own fallings out. They equally appreciate the way Christian values shape the individual support staff offer to their families in the kindness and caring they display. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is impressive, with pupils of all ages describing the impact of creative RE lessons on their own spirituality.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Engaging, distinctively Christian, whole school and smaller group worships are effectively planned for and delivered by many staff and the inspirational clergy of the school. Clear monitoring and evaluation has led to a varied and tailored programme of worship which suits the school community. Implementation of singing during community worship let parents 'join in with worship rather than just watch'. Older pupils appreciate the created opportunity for year group worship which is more 'comfortable and private'. In these smaller groups, they offer their knowledge and skill much more willingly than during whole school worship. Bible stories and a focus on the Holy Trinity, especially the life of Jesus Christ, gives focus to worship and allows pupils to speak clearly about how this influences their own actions. By using the varied strengths of the two Church leaders, pupils of all ages experience relevant and engaging worship opportunities. One pupil described her understanding that she 'can worship anywhere, inside or outside – it makes no difference to God'. Positive partnerships with the local parishes continue to develop. Clergy use their relevant expertise to the benefit of all pupils, staff and the wider community. These opportunities lead to a community, which is self-reflective, inclusive and supportive of others.

Development of well-attended, weekly community worship impacts on pupils' experience of the importance of Christ in the lives of practising Christians. The atmosphere, enthusiasm and clear bond created by this shared time is a huge positive and a great example of what can be achieved through Christian partnership. Detailed worship 'floor books' reflect pupil pride and knowledge. These reflective journals clearly express the impact of worship on their lives, in words and pictures. The opportunities for prayer and reflection which worship offers is further developed with formal and informal prayer time for school members. Development of 'prayer spaces' in diverse styles and places has given prayer great relevance. Staff, pupils and parents talk openly about the support prayer and worship offer them in times of personal problems. Several pupils and staff verbalise their personal spiritual journey, brought about by the impact of worship and the strong, supportive Christian nature of the school. The enthusiastic pupil RE and worship group create many opportunities to further develop spirituality particularly through the impressive 'Postinia' which offers pupils withdrawal space for prayer and reflection.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The performance and progress of pupils in RE is of the highest standard. Tracking outcomes with great accuracy and understanding gives the talented and committed RE leader a clear focus to her actions. She is determined and highly skilled in driving progress. Her personal belief in the importance of RE in the lives of pupils leads to a growing, living and engaging curriculum. Planning based on skills progression creates lessons which stimulate and challenge pupils to be better learners and better people. Question based learning gives pupils the opportunity to apply different learning styles built on their own curiosity and intuitive nature. Enjoyable and challenging lessons have created a deep understanding of Christianity in pupils. They love RE and describe with passion the enjoyment they get from creative lessons, particularly the many which take place in the outdoor environment where pupils

appreciate 'God's world'. They also enjoy the different faith visits and visitors on offer and have a growing but still limited understanding of the beliefs and needs of others in the surrounding area and wider world community.

The Diocesan syllabus has been tailored to suit the needs of the school and all pupils now make at least good progress, with the majority making outstanding progress. This is accurately tracked against well-developed skills targets and monitored by cross-school moderation and regular work scrutiny. Targeted support is given, particularly to new staff, to ensure the high standards of teaching are maintained. The overseeing of the pupil RE and worship group by the RE lead ensures a seamless and effective impact of RE learning on the SMSC of the whole school. Her knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject is echoed in the dedication and commitments of the pupils. The skill of the RE lead has been identified by school leaders. Her input is now being given at Diocesan level and through initial teacher training (ITT) to ensure that teaching of RE in other establishments continues to develop, especially for newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

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

This forward thinking and progressive Church school has leaders who are protective of its Church heritage. They are passionate and highly effective in their running of the school and model Christian values in their relationships and interactions. Nurture and support is exemplary from a principal which a member of staff described as 'a strong leader but with a kind and caring nature'. Commitment to allow each individual to flourish is clear in the opportunities offered, standards achieved and the direction set out for the school. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The Christian character of the school is given the highest profile which creates an atmosphere where values are paramount.

Governors are active and knowledgeable in their overseeing of the school. They work well with the principal, supporting and challenging her to ensure that Christian values are present in the decisions made, particularly when setting up the new multi-academy trust (MAT). Clear and effective systems of evaluation create accurate knowledge and continual improvement. Parents clearly see the standards achieved by the school and appreciate the opportunities and development it offers their children. They describe a visible principal, who listens carefully and offer many examples of alterations and implementations based on their input.

Outstanding practice has led to national recognition as a support school, enabling continued support to be given to other schools and trainee teachers. The importance of the Christian aspect of the school has led to the restructuring of RE training modules and input into the development of the new diocesan RE syllabus. Many staff verbalise the support they receive to improve and also the emotional support offered by the principal and chair of governors when enduring personal difficulties. The strength and values of the school leaders are best reflected in the staffing structure of the school where new leaders are continually grown. The school ethos continues to develop due to the many members of the leadership team who have developed over time in the school. The principal of the local Church of England Primary School is the former deputy principal of Benedict Biscop. She openly describes her spiritual growth during her time at a school which 'lives and breathes Christianity'. These strong Christian relationships further develop the church school partnerships in the local community. It is this strength of Christian leadership which will continue to guide the school as part of the new MAT which has been created in order to preserve the Christian heritage of the school.

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