

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Busbridge Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Brighton Road
Goldalming
Surrey
GU7 1XA

Diocese: Guildford

Local authority: Surrey

Date of inspection: 8 May 2014

Date of last inspection: 18 November 2008

School's unique reference number: 125186

Headteacher: Carolyn Holmes

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Busbridge is an average size junior school with 237 pupils on roll. The school is situated on the edge of the town. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as are those who are entitled to receive the pupil premium although this number has doubled in the last year. The majority of children are from a white British heritage and come from favourable socio-economic backgrounds. There have been considerable changes to both the governing body and staffing since the previous inspection.

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

- Explicit Christian values are central to the high quality of relationships that permeate the whole school community.
- Pupils are confident to articulate their views on matters of faith and belief as well as to empathise with the views of others.
- The commitment of the school's leaders and governors to the ongoing development of the school as a church school ensures that the impact of the Christian ethos is continually evolving.

Areas to improve

- Build on the existing opportunities for spiritual development by revisiting the school ethos statement and developing a whole school approach to spirituality that links it more closely with the Christian ethos, core values, learning skills and well-being.
- Raise the quality of teaching in religious education (RE) from good to the majority being outstanding through the use of more focussed learning objectives that provide greater challenge to pupils' learning.
- Leaders and governors to develop systems that monitor and evaluate the impact of the quality of experiences provided for pupils to develop their spirituality.

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

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in making more explicit the role of overtly Christian values and their impact on the well-being and learning of pupils. These values make a significant contribution to the high quality of relationships throughout the school community and are increasingly making a positive difference to pupils' academic achievement through their growing links with learning skills. Standards of attainment are high and overall, pupils achieve well above national expectations. The school's values are rooted in Christian principles and equip pupils well, with the knowledge and confidence to explore and share matters of faith and belief openly which, as parents appreciate, allows their children to 'make up their own minds'. A particular strength of the school are the opportunities pupils have to explore questions of faith and belief and the time to reflect on what they think. This growing awareness of belief and an understanding of what it means to be human is a significant factor to the pupil's spiritual development. The school's ethos statement was created some years ago and the school has identified that the time is right to revisit it. They are aware that by doing this, they can bring together more effectively the core values and learning skills, with an ethos that enhances the quality of experiences for pupils to develop their personal spirituality. Pupils have a very clear understanding of links between their values and making moral choices. For example, older pupils spoke with a strong commitment about making right decisions and the importance of treating everyone equally because 'that is how God wants us to act'. Younger pupils explained how the school helps them learn from their mistakes and 'to do the right thing in a positive way'. The school works hard to ensure pupils are aware of the diverse nature of society in Britain and that Christianity is a world faith. Pupils are respectful of different faiths and understand that society should show tolerance for the views and opinions of others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The use of the 'Values for Life' materials for the last three years has been central to the development of acts of worship, by linking them more closely to a whole school Christian ethos. The impact of this is evident in the pupils' articulation of how collective worship is an essential aspect of being a church school and that what they learn in worship affects life in school and beyond. This view is shared by parents who say that acts of worship allow their children to reflect on 'universal values' that have meaning in their children's lives. Collective worship is thoroughly planned. Themes are explicitly based on values, which are linked to Christian teaching and reflect events in the church year. Pupils have a good understanding of the main Christian festivals through experiences such as the recent Easter Pause Day, which encourage pupils to reflect on the deeper meaning of the significance of Easter. Collective worship positively contributes to spiritual development, through the opportunities to be still and reflect on the meaning of abstract concepts. For example, in the worship observed, pupils were encouraged to empathise with others by imagining how it might feel to be alone in a forest world and then discover that they are being protected by their family. Through such involvement, pupils are engaged with the act of worship. Acts of worship have elements of welcome, Bible stories, time for reflection and prayer. There are references to the Trinity and pupils are developing their understanding of this. Younger pupils, for example, described different names for God but said that 'it doesn't matter who you pray to, they are all the same really'. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the purpose of prayer and how it can be used. Older pupils, for example, discuss with maturity an awareness of God's presence and whether you have to be Christian to feel it. There are effective systems to monitor collective worship and feedback is sought from pupils to help improve the quality. The development of class based acts of worship has helped to develop teachers' skills in delivering worship. More could be done to involve pupils more regularly in the planning, leading and evaluation of worship.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Standards in religious education (RE) have been consistently rising for the past three years and are now at least in line with national expectations for the vast majority of pupils by the time

they leave at the end of Key Stage 2. Most pupils make at least expected progress in RE and attainment is broadly in line with other core subjects. Current assessment data indicates that achievement at the higher levels in RE is lower when compared with those in some aspects of English. The school is aware of this and is in the process of gathering evidence to identify why this may be the case. The school has addressed the area for improvement from the previous report to continue to develop assessment of RE and has made good progress. Pupils' progress in their knowledge and understanding of RE is assessed three times a year with achievement levelled against national criteria and data collected to give an accurate picture of overall standards. Samples of pupils' work are used by teachers to help ensure there is a consistent understanding of the level that each pupil has achieved. This work is in the process of being developed. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good with considerable strengths. This confirms the school's own assessment of RE lessons. The most effective teaching uses carefully designed learning objectives through which teachers plan exciting learning activities that challenge pupils' understanding and which lead to greater progress in knowledge and particularly with understanding of RE. To raise the quality of teaching further there needs to be greater consistency in the use of focussed learning objectives across the school. Religious education is a vibrant and important part of the wider school curriculum. Pupils regard the subject positively saying they enjoy the opportunities to discuss Christianity and other major world religions. They engage very well in lessons and contribute to class discussions with enthusiasm. Religious education makes an important contribution to the Christian ethos through promotion of the school's values and by providing opportunities for pupils to reflect. Leadership of RE is excellent. The co-ordinator is passionate about the subject and has a clear grasp of what needs to be done to continue to further develop RE. She has delivered staff training in various aspects of RE that has led to improvements. Her promotion of dedicated RE days has helped to enhance the whole school community's understanding of what it means to be a church school.

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

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in developing its understanding of what it means to be a church school. The headteacher has led the school community in the revitalisation of Christian values to place them more explicitly at the heart of a distinctively Christian ethos. The use of the 'Values for Life' materials has raised the profile of Christian values and provided a framework for greater consistency in the way they are articulated and delivered by the staff. The headteacher and other school leaders have worked alongside governors, particularly the vicar, to make closer links between these core values and acts of worship. Parents say that the values help their children have a greater understanding of themselves and that the 'grounding' in Christian principles gives them the strength to face serious issues. Governors similarly have clearly articulated how the school's Christian ethos makes an impact on the lives of pupils through their willingness to openly discuss matters of faith and belief within a safe environment. School leaders and governors are committed to the continued improvement of the school as a church school and have a good grasp of the next steps to ensure that the school continues to flourish. They have a good understanding that as the impact of the Christian ethos develops, so they will need to refine procedures for monitoring and evaluation. Relationships with the local church are very strong and there are mutually beneficial links between the two communities. The use of the school on Sundays to hold well attended services and the holiday clubs provided by the church are excellent examples of this strong relationship. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements and ongoing training ensures that staff are kept up to date with developments in these areas.