



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Bitterne CE Primary School**

Brownlow Avenue  
Bitterne  
Southampton  
SO19 7BX

**Previous SIAS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Winchester**

Local authority: Southampton

Dates of inspection: 13 July 2016

Date of last inspection: 14 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 116339

Headteacher: Andy Peterson

Inspector's name and number: Lorraine Pugh 816

### **School context**

Bitterne Church of England primary school has 420 children on roll. It became a primary school in 2014 with the merging of Bitterne infant and junior schools and the majority of its children live in the local area. In 2015 the school was inspected by Ofsted and judged to be a good school. The headteacher was the previous headteacher of the junior school. The school's population has an increasing number of children whose first language is not English and children from backgrounds other than white British. Approximately a fifth of pupils receive the government pupil premium funding. The number of children with special educational needs is in line with the national average.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bitterne CE VC primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

- The school's Christian values are embedded in all aspects of school life and are known and followed by all members of the school community.
- The inspirational and caring leadership of the headteacher, religious education (RE) leader and collective worship leader, allows children to achieve well within a highly effective Christian environment.
- The teaching about Christianity in collective worship and religious education makes a significant impact on the school's Christian character.

### **Areas to improve**

- More first hand experiences are needed to increase children's knowledge of different faiths, and their similarities to and differences from Christianity.
- The school needs to develop a more rigorous and robust approach to the governors' monitoring role in order to increase their effectiveness in challenging the school.

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

Core Christian values of Love, Trust and Forgiveness strongly underpin all aspects of the school's work because they are explicit and well established. They are constantly re-enforced in communications with children and parents, and also in the headteacher's weekly letter to all members of his staff team. These Christian values are taught to children from the very beginning of their time at Bitterne, successfully raising their feelings of self-worth and their desire to be the best they can be. As a result, academic standards are in line with the national age expectations and children make at least expected progress from their individual starting points. Parents say the school's values and its approach to learning enables their children to achieve well. They recognise and appreciate the extra support given to children when it is needed. They describe the school as a place 'where everybody listens and where issues are dealt with swiftly and sensitively'. Behaviour is exemplary, with politeness and respect clearly evident. This was evidenced at a recent sporting festival where teachers from other schools voted to award the Bitterne team with the 'Fair Play' award. 'Restorative practice', closely interwoven with the school's Christian values, gives children the necessary skills to nurture and maintain positive relationships. The school is ambitious for every single one of its pupils, seeing each as unique in the eyes of God, and this is clearly reflected in the school's approach to supporting individual children who need significant help both inside and outside of school. Despite huge challenges in life, these children are able to learn and play happily with their friends because of the loving and safe environment created by the school. Opportunities for spiritual development and reflection are seen throughout the school building and within its curriculum, successfully supporting children's awareness of themselves, others and the world around them. The children have an increasing knowledge of other cultures and faiths and they understand why it is important to treat everybody with respect, regardless of difference. This was evident in a recent activity where the school council worked with children from another school who followed faiths other than Christianity. Through their study of faith differences and similarities, they came to their own conclusion that, regardless of faith, God loves us all. RE is a popular subject that has a significant role in shaping the Christian ethos of the school. The passionate RE leader ensures that standards are at least in line with other core subjects and this is clearly evident in examples of the children's writing. For example, when they consider the moral issues around prejudice and stereotypical language. The children take their charity and voluntary work very seriously, saying that it is important to help each other as much as we can. Children's acts of Christian service and responsibility are shown clearly in their Civic Award involvement, where they undertook litter picks and organised a senior citizens' tea party. The Ugandan charity, which the school supports with the local church, helps children to gain a first hand experience of the impact charity can have, for example, seeing the delight of the Ugandan children when they received their football shirts.

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

Collective worship has a strong central place in daily life and it clearly reflects the school's Christian character. Children are able to discuss worship themes and talk positively about how they impact on their everyday actions. Biblical stories and the teachings of Jesus are linked to the school's values and this allows children to define them as Christian values. For example, the children were able to explain that their value of love is shown in the story of The Good Samaritan and they said how important it is to treat others how you would like to be treated. Children say that worship is a special time when everybody gets together and also a time when they learn how to be better people. Enthusiastic singing and music play a very important role in making worship an engaging and enjoyable experience for the whole school community. Everybody is included and adults go to great lengths in making attendance possible for children whose behaviour could make it a difficult part of the school day for them. A range of leaders and services held in the church gives pupils a rich variety of worship experiences and children say that visits to the church are special times. Anglican traditions are used and children are able to explain their significance, for example the candle showing the presence of Jesus. The Trinity is

taught at an age appropriate level and children are able to describe God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One parent shared with the school the poster her son had chosen to make at home to illustrate the Trinity, clearly evidencing the impact of the school's teaching. Prayer and time for reflection are especially important features of worship and a significant number of children volunteer to lead the whole school with their own personal prayers, thus clearly showing its importance in their lives. Parents come into school for an adult prayer group and this shows the school's Christian character impacting on adults as well as children. Opportunities are given for prayer throughout the school day and class worship areas have many examples of child-initiated prayers. Children say they like the way these are shared with others, however, they also say that their privacy is respected if they would like to keep their prayers to themselves. Children enjoy the many opportunities they have to plan and lead worship within their classes and systems for this are very well established. In the class worship observed the children responded to the questions raised by the child worship leaders with the same levels of thought that they would give to an adult. This level of involvement is supporting children's understanding of the role of worship in their lives. The worship leader has formalised systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of worship, and this information guides future planning and professional development. The views of the children and adults form an important part of worship management and this has been a successful feature in ensuring the high standards of worship provision in the school.

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

The vision, ethos and ambition of the school are clearly rooted in its distinctive Christian values and this has been pivotal to the leadership's success in joining together the junior and infant schools. The development points from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The headteacher ensures that children and staff are central to all school decisions and policies and this has resulted in a vibrant, caring school where everybody is valued. He is very strongly supported by the RE leader, worship leader and governors in making the values explicit to every member of staff and this results in a clear understanding of how to support the individual needs of all children. Established procedures are in place for subject leaders to rigorously monitor the effectiveness of RE and worship and this information guides the school's further development as a Christian school. However, governors' monitoring evidence does not show the same depth of challenge and they recognise this as an area for development. The RE leader is able to articulate how she is developing RE and also describe the impact of past actions, for example, the re-wording of lesson success criteria so that it now links more closely with assessment systems. The Church/School Partnership committee meet regularly to self-evaluate and develop the school's Christian character. This has resulted in key discussions, for example, possible changes to the church furniture in order to increase its capacity, thus accommodating the whole school community at the same time. This evidences the strength of the school and church working together and the high value placed on this partnership. Diocesan training has supported the professional development of the leaders and this has been successfully used to train other adults in the school. The worship leader's involvement with the Farmington Scholarship project has been instrumental in achieving the very high quality of child-led collective worship. The resources created for this project are supporting the development of children's theological thinking in relation to God's word, love and presence, and the worship leader is sharing this work with other Christian schools. The school's recent project with another school involving pupils of different faiths working together has been successful in helping to develop children's understanding of other faiths and cultures. However, not all the children in the school have been able to have these first hand encounters with other faiths, and the school has identified this as an area for development. Parents praise the school for the way it nurtures their children in love and Christian values, making Bitterne primary a distinctive and effective Church school. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.

SIAMS report July 2016 Bitterne CE VC Primary school. Southampton. SO19 7BX