

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Basildon Church of England Primary School

School Lane Upper Basildon Reading Berkshire RG8 8PD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	West Berkshire
Date of inspection	13 June 2018
Date of last inspection	25 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Voluntary Controlled 109949
Headteacher	Melissa Cliffe
Inspector's name and number	Toby Long 896

School context

Basildon Church of England Primary School is a small school serving a rural community. Currently there are 134 pupils on roll. Pupils are taught in single age classes across Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1, then in mixed age classes in Key Stage 2. Pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average. Fewer pupils are in receipt of the pupil premium than is the case nationally. The parish church of St Stephen is within walking distance of the school. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to staff and governors. The headteacher took up her post in September 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Basildon Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values have swiftly and effectively been woven throughout the school like a golden thread. The impact of these values is clearly articulated by every member of the school community.
- The new headteacher has led a team who have transformed the school, ensuring that the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of Basildon as a church school is of a very high standard.
- Courageous and inspirational leadership of the headteacher has enabled Basildon to flourish and develop rapidly as a distinctly Anglican school.
- Pupils' passion for worship is infectious. Pupils of all ages plan, lead and evaluate acts of worship to a very high standard.
- The behaviour of pupils is supported by a guiding Christian vision that ensures pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is robustly supported.
- A strong and mutually beneficial relationship exists between the school and parish church together with its clergy and community, which further enhances the school's Christian character.

Areas to improve

- To develop the contribution religious education (RE) makes to pupils' understanding of other faith communities so that all pupils' respect of difference and diversity is further enhanced.
- To develop greater opportunities for prayer, reflection and worship to take place outside, so that pupils' experiences of worship are further enhanced.

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

Basildon has been on an inspirational journey in recent times. The creation of Christian values and vision has united the school community on a common path. Christian values of respect, resilience and excellence have been embedded rapidly into the daily life of the whole school community. Basildon's values are based on three Bible passages, which pupils know well. Parents comment that, 'leaders live out the values. Our children and families follow this excellent role model'. The impact of the values is tangible. Issues with attainment data in 2017 have been robustly addressed by leaders and staff, so that pupils are now achieving at least in line with national expectations. The shared vision, which is based on the Bible verse Philippians 4:13, is lived out by pupils in their ambition to do the best they can at school. Distinctively Christian values have supported academic achievement by developing pupils' resilience and perseverance. Attendance at Basildon is higher than the national average as a result of the high profile of the Christian character and the school's approach to handling attendance. The overwhelming majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. As a result, the school has strategically planned to ensure that pupils are fully aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. Special RE days, such as ones held to explore Advent and Easter celebrations around the world, are enthusiastically received by pupils and parents as rich opportunities to explore the global nature of Christianity. Pupils have developed a high degree of understanding and respect for diversity and difference within Christianity and leaders have identified the need to develop this for other faiths. The SMSC development of pupils is a priority for strategic planning. As a result pupils SMSC development is of a high standard. Pupils' experiences at school continue at home. As one parent said, 'Children talk about God's love at home and it has become a rock in their lives.' The school's value of resilience supports the most vulnerable pupils in feeling included and has tackled issues such as anxiety, to ensure that pupil well-being and mental health are taken seriously within the school community. Changes to a gender neutral uniform ensure that difference and diversity is celebrated and pupils feel that their uniqueness is recognised in the safety of this church school.

The school has created a remembrance garden as a permanent space to remember pupil's family members, staff and community members who have passed away. Bereavement is handled sensitively and effectively at Basildon within the loving context of God. Pupils' spirituality is nurtured and developed exceptionally well at Basildon. Initiatives such as the Meet and Eat, when older community members come to share a hot meal with children and listen to them read, ensures that the whole community see the value of the school as a church school and charitable social action is widespread. Such examples of powerful engagement opportunities with the wider community are typical at Basildon and demonstrates how spirituality is woven into everyday opportunities.

Pupils are excited and challenged in RE lessons. RE makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school. As one parent explained, 'Children love RE lessons and the opportunity to ask deep questions. My daughter said, "RE is everywhere Mummy!"' The learning environment promotes and supports the Christian character of the school with displays that are rich in pupils' creative work and in celebrating the school's Christian distinctiveness.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils at Basildon are passionate about worship. As pupils' explained, 'worship is a spiritual times to reflect for us all'. Parents enthusiastically join in singing and find the children's leadership of worship moving. The youngest pupils are often observed to re-enact worship in their role play. Worship has a strong focus on the person of Jesus Christ and pupils demonstrate a deep knowledge of his central place in the Christian faith. Acts of worship ensure that the Holy Trinity is clearly understood and this is supported through RE lessons. Pupils talk about the, 'shamrock having three heart-shaped leaves to symbolise God's love and the three parts of God'. Children articulate the Holy Trinity very well as a result of a focus from clergy and staff to support this. Three floating candles act as a visible reminder in every act of worship. A Worship Team consisting of pupils from across the school ensure that acts of worship are often entirely led by pupils. Clergy, staff, parents and visitors lead worship, which offers a rich experience to the school community. Great value is placed on collective worship and pupils say, 'Worship helps us make the right choices.' Staff say that, 'Pupils take ownership of worship.' In the act of worship observed during the inspection, pupils led the whole session with great confidence. The Worship Team create opportunities for the whole school community to gather, engage and respond in a variety of ways. Pupils confidently plan, lead and evaluate worship regularly. Children are selected from different year groups to evaluate each act of worship and feedback is shared with the adult or Worship Team leading the act of worship. Feedback from pupils and governors is used to make improvements to worship. For example, pupils requested more interactive worship with props. The Worship Team were only too pleased to provide this. All stakeholders are encouraged to evaluate worship and leaders use this alongside pupil voice to develop outstanding practice.

The relationship between the parish church and school is fundamental in supporting the Christian character at Basildon. Clergy are fully engaged in school life and this relationship is mutually beneficial. A lunchtime Christian based club is run by clergy and large numbers of pupils choose to attend. Worship regularly takes place in the parish church and parents and village community are invited to attend. This partnership has led to some parents reengaging with

their own faith and members of the school community attending the Alpha course run at St Stephen's church. Pupils from Christian families and those with no faith explain that, 'You don't need to be a Christian to lead worship, everyone is included. Worship is a way I can express how I feel and leading worship helps me explore my spirituality.'

Collective worship is firmly rooted in scripture. Clergy enthuse about the pupils' level of understanding about Bible stories. Parables are used to support the school's Christian values. Pupils clearly articulate how the Bible helps them live a better life. Through thorough planning, pupils can identify the distinctive features of different Christian traditions in worship. Anglican traditions are well explained and explored. For example, pupils have a thorough knowledge of the Church's year and Christian festivals are celebrated wholeheartedly at Basildon, which enables a deep level of understanding. Leaders ensure that worship themes are topical and raise aspirations for the whole school community. As a result, the children take great responsibility for their own conduct and charitable actions expressed. Parents explain that, 'Children care about issues shared in worship, such as charity work.' A pupil said, 'We want to help others because that's what Jesus would do.' Prayer is valued by pupils throughout the school. Reflection stations, prayer trees and prayer walls in classrooms are used effectively for quiet prayer during the day. Prayer spaces inside are engaging and calming for pupils who seek out opportunities to use them for personal prayer. In acts of worship pupils enjoy leading spontaneous prayer with confidence. Worship takes place in classrooms and the school hall, but there are limited opportunities for reflection, prayer and worship outside in the school grounds.

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

During her first year as headteacher, the whole school community acknowledges and celebrates the Christian witness and leadership she has brought to Basildon. The headteacher has built a team that consistently and confidently articulates, lives out and promotes a shared vision rooted in distinctively Christian values. As a result, leaders are able to deliver transformational change at the school. Collective worship and RE are led by the headteacher, which ensures they are given a high profile. Leaders have a thorough knowledge of the school's performance and distinctiveness through insightful self-evaluation that draws on the whole school community to monitor. Governors play an active role in monitoring the Christian distinctiveness through regular visits to school, discussions with staff, parents and pupils and by observing worship regularly. Governors have accessed training and support from the diocese to ensure they are carrying out their roles effectively. Staff development as leaders in church schools is planned strategically, with substantial benefits for the leadership of the school. The RE and collective worship leader has engaged in training to support their role and as a result provision in both areas have been revolutionised. The Understanding Christianity programme has been used to develop teaching in RE and the implementation of this training is evident throughout each year group. Plans are in place for a new member of staff to take on the leadership of RE from the headteacher and training is prepared for this induction.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is linked back to the school's Christian values, which are woven throughout the school like a golden thread. The well-being of pupils is of paramount importance to leaders. Through rich opportunities to engage in SMSC development, pupils feel safe and loved in this church school. For example, a recent art week focused on 'peace' and how pupils can represent this in a creative way. Pupils created large scale stained glass windows that adorn the hall, celebrating the school's Christian values and acting as a focus for worship. At Easter, a home learning activity asked pupils to create a cross with meaning to them. The hall, as the space for worship, proudly displays pupil's crosses created on Minecraft and in straw from a pupil's farm. Leaders have enabled pupils to celebrate the Christian character of the school by such inspiring and exciting curriculum enrichment opportunities. Leaders are keen to explore Christian distinctiveness through RE and Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions that enable deep thinking and reflection on Christian teaching and theology. Pupils are observed to ask questions and encouraged to explore their own answers with confidence.

Engagement with parents is at the heart of the school's recent developments. Parents feel that leaders listen to their views and make strategic decisions that reflect and enhance the Christian character of the school. There have been a lot of changes in a relatively short time at Basildon and parents see the improvements at the school shining through. Parents are keen to support the wider school community and feel the school is, 'Now very much at the heart of village life.' Leaders sought to use support from the diocese to drive change. The strategic way in which leaders have gone about improvements means that they are sustainable and long lasting. Partnerships with other local church schools enable leaders to see best practice and develop an outstanding Christian character at Basildon. Clergy contribute fully to school life and support pupils' understanding of local and national communities. The mutually beneficial relationship with the local church has led to greater engagement in the life of the church from members of the school community. All areas for improvement at the last inspection have been fully addressed by the school's current leadership. The arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet the statutory requirements.