



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Blackshaw Moor Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School
Buxton Road, Blackshaw Moor
Staffordshire. ST13 8TW

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire

Date of inspection: 23rd October 2014

Date of last inspection: 21st October 2009

School's unique reference number: 124287

Headteacher: Jill Tillmanns

Inspector's name and number: R Mary Gale 337

School context

Blackshaw Moor is a very small rural school, 2.5 miles from Leek on the edge of the Peak National Park with 58 pupils on roll. As a first school, provision is for pupils from age 3-9 years. 100% of pupils are white British. They come from a variety of social backgrounds. Some pupils travel from the neighbouring villages of Thorncliffe, Meerbrook and Upper Hulme The current Headteacher has been in post since September 2005 and the foundation governor since 2012. Since September 2014 there has been a new worship co-ordinator. The school is supported by a number of local church leaders due to an interregnum. Many parents have chosen the school because of its reputation as a caring and inclusive church school. The school was inspected by Ofsted in October 2014 and judged to be good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blackshaw Moor as a Church of England school are good

- The inclusive and cohesive school environment which lives out Christian values and strongly influences all aspects of school life.
- The respectful, articulate and exceptionally well-behaved pupils, who demonstrate good attitudes to learning and succeed well.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher and her passion for ensuring the spiritual experiences offered to pupils are of a high quality.

Areas to improve

- Formalise the Governing Body's evaluation of the schools' core Christian beliefs to inform strategic direction, utilising support from the Diocese.
- Involve staff, clergy and foundation governors in systematically evaluating the impact of worship for pupils.
- Broaden the pupils' understanding of Anglican traditions to include the world wide dimension.
- Enhance the school's Anglican foundation by broadening the links with St Matthew's church and its future leaders.

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

This school is a welcoming, Christian community which offers its pupils opportunities to grow and develop through the formative years of their education. The Christian values of perseverance, courage, love, care, forgiveness, co-operation and respect are lived out. These underpin policy and practice. Governors hold leaders to account in relation to academic learning ensuring the school performs at its best. The school's results in July 2014 were good overall; current data shows this trend is continuing in 2014-2015. The majority of pupils make good progress and reach a good level of development, regardless of their ability or background. This is due to the high aspirations of all teachers. Pupil relationships are nurtured so that everyone feels cared for as one big family this inspires pupils to work hard and rise to challenges. Parents, including those of special needs pupils praise the care and diligent support given by teachers to enable their child to reach their potential. Parents stated *"I chose this school for my child, it is very supportive and creative in the way they teach"* ... *"People want to come here and choose to come here"*. Parents value the safe and supportive environment provided which is evidenced through the way in which pupils enjoy school and conduct themselves both at home and in the community. The spiritual development of pupils is supported by high quality experiences across the curriculum. These experiences provide pupils with opportunities to increasingly express views which reflect a growing spirituality. In Geography and Science pupils become aware of the richness of God's world and their responsibility in safeguarding it. This is also highlighted through Eco and Forest schools initiatives and the frequent visits from the Park Ranger. The outdoor areas, including the conservation area and especially the gazebo, are well used, so that pupils are able to reflect on the school day in an oasis of calm. One pupil stated *"we go there if we are feeling sad or angry and then we learn to be calm"*. The interactive prayer web in class 2 also contributes towards pupils' spiritual development. The vast majority of pupils know that belonging to a church school is important and that the values of the school are rooted in the teachings of Jesus. When asked what this means to them, one shared, *'Jesus is really special, he is the spirit. He showed courage'* Another said *"Harvest time is when Jesus gave us the first seeds so we thank him and his heavenly father; we also thank the farmers for working with the seeds"* Key Stage 2 pupils are able to make the connection about their feelings of needing courage and compare this with the courage Jesus needed when he was crucified. This school values and rewards the achievements of all pupils both at home and school. As a result these young, confident pupils are keen to make a positive contribution. Pupils enjoy donating to charity. Through this they experience the Christian values of service and gratitude. Religious education [RE] impacts well on the schools' Christian character; pupils say that stories from Christianity and other faiths show them how to live their lives. This promotes an understanding of, and a developing respect for diverse communities. Pupils' understanding of world-wide Christian practice is limited. This undermines pupils' understanding of community cohesion; emphasis on broadening learning from local to world-wide issues would address this. Relationships in school are outstanding resulting in a calm and purposeful Christian community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils value worship and see it as a cornerstone in the life of the school. They are able to talk about the values that worship addresses. These support the personal and moral development of pupils, who can link them to their daily lives and relationships. They enjoy both whole school and classroom worship each week. These two settings provide different opportunities for engagement and response. The dedicated "worship corner" within class 2 is used well by pupils as a quiet space. Opportunities are offered in worship for pupils to pray, reflect, respond to Bible texts and answer questions. Worship generates excitement about the wonders and meaning of the world. Pupils say it makes a difference to their lives. The pupils recognise the benefits of reflection in worship and of there being a dedicated time for stillness and calm despite the pressure and hurly burly of daily life in school. Many pupils commented, *"in worship we learn to follow God; to be good Christians"*. The importance placed on pupils' own prayers and the sharing of these prayers is apparent. The Lord's Prayer is prayed daily so pupils

are clear about what forgiveness means to them. Pupils state clearly the reason why they need to pray “with hands pointing up to God, then God hears the message.” Pupils enjoy adding prayers to the prayer web in the Year 3/4 classroom. Some make more use of these prayer opportunities than others. These prayers enable them to communicate their feelings to God. Pupils benefit greatly from meeting the variety of church leaders from the Leek Church Team who visit fortnightly. These leaders are committed to supporting worship during a period of change. The pupils speak about their visits with enthusiasm. Pupils are welcomed by the worshipping parish community of St Matthew’s. Pupils say they find the church calm and it stirs strong feelings inside them. They attend the annual Harvest Festival service and a variety of other celebration services. Eucharist services have been held in school once a term for Year 3/4 pupils providing opportunities for pupils to perform key roles such as carrying the wine, water and wafers to the school altar. Although they cannot play the leading part in this Eucharist service, having the opportunity to handle sacred vessels containing wine and water has produced a feeling of reverence and awe for the symbols which are intrinsic to the service and to their developing understanding of core Christian beliefs. Pupils commented how they join in the communion responses and perform the readings and prayers. Pupils say they particularly enjoy worship when they are playing an active role. Planning of worship, by the new worship co-ordinator is in its infancy. A new rolling programme of worship planning is based on Christian values. Core Christian belief and aspects of Anglican practice are not yet fully embedded in this programme, and pupils understanding is developing. Worship includes teaching about Jesus and the pupils can explain why he is ‘special’. Bible stories are regularly included in worship but sometimes pupils’ recall of these is confused. Pupils have a simple understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At present the evaluation of worship is carried out by staff and pupils, supported by parent feedback. The evaluation of worship by governors is currently underdeveloped, so there is a lack of evidence to inform provision. Parents comment that worship is having a positive impact on their children and that they enjoy being included in celebration events.

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

The Headteacher, supported by the worship co-ordinator and the governors, has a clear vision of how distinctive Christian values need to be central to school life. These school leaders speak confidently and accurately about the schools’ Christian vision based on these values. As a result pupils are successful in all aspects of school life. Detailed analysis of performance and progress ensures that all pupils’ learning needs are supported, enabling them to overcome educational, social and economic disadvantage. Standards of attainment and rates of progress are in line and often above the national average because this school celebrates the unique contribution each pupil brings to school. It ensures pupils are given the encouragement to be the best they can be. This has a positive impact on the well-being of all pupils. The Governing Body’s evaluation of the schools’ core Christian beliefs to inform strategic direction is yet to be formalised. Whilst they value the strengths of the school, they are aware of areas for development and have discussed the actions that need to be taken to move the school forward - such as the developing of a new Christian school motto. The co-ordinator for religious education and worship also holds a realistic view of areas to be addressed. These include more systematic teaching of Bible stories and embedding and developing the evaluation of the impact of worship within the annual cycle of monitoring and review. Parents are appreciative of the ways in which their views are informally and formally sought. They say their children are nurtured and safe at school. They appreciate the openness of the school resulting in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Pastoral links with the local church community are well developed, as exemplified by the variety of events on offer where members of the school and church community are prominent in their support, such as the flower festival, Harvest service and the “Club day service”. These links are helping pupils understand that they belong to a caring Christian community where all individuals are valued.