



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Burham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Bell Lane, Burham, Kent ME1 3SY

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 11 July 2016

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 118620

Headteacher: Michelle Grima

Inspector's name and number: Anne Southgate 820

School context

Burham is a smaller than average sized primary school, serving Burham and the neighbouring towns and villages. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds. Pupil mobility is higher than average. Many of the pupils who move into the school from other schools have special needs. Less than 10% of pupils are from church going families. The school is housed in spacious, modern buildings.

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

- The increased focus on the Christian character of the school has resulted in pupils being exceptionally courteous and well behaved.
- The school is highly inclusive, because pupils and staff have a deep understanding of their Christian value of 'acceptance'.
- The many opportunities to reflect and pray create a calm environment, in which pupils develop well spiritually and morally.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that religious education (RE) allows the most able to achieve higher levels of attainment.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to plan and to lead worship, so that pupils take ownership of this aspect of school life.
- Relate the Christian values explicitly to learning, so that their impact on achievement is as strong as it is on behaviour.
- Ensure that there is consistency in the way Christian values are written into school policies, so that the impact of these values is clear.

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

The Christian character of the school has deepened since the current headteacher took up her post. Clear Christian values of respect, acceptance, compassion, trust and forgiveness are well known by pupils, staff and governors. This addresses an issue from the previous denominational inspection. These values underpin the life of the school, particularly in relation to behaviour and attitudes. For example, a pupil explained that we should accept and show compassion for everyone, as Jesus healed lepers. As a result of the embedded Christian values, the school is now a genuine Christian family. Everyone is very considerate towards others, and pupils are exceptionally polite, courteous and well behaved. This has created a calm, reflective environment, in which pupils can learn, and in which they develop well spiritually. The explicit impact of the Christian values is, however, greater on behaviour and on wellbeing than it is on learning. The school is highly inclusive because of the emphasis placed on the acceptance of others. This means that those who are different, including those with special needs, thrive. Pupils can talk with confidence about being a good neighbour. They explain that beliefs, race, and customs are no barrier to everyone mattering equally to God. As a consequence, pupils have a high degree of understanding and respect for diversity. Effective care is offered to families experiencing difficulties, and consequently attendance is good. The many and various interactive displays around the school encourage pupils to pray and to reflect on their attitudes and choices. As a result, the Christian character contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Pupils' achievement has risen in recent years, including in RE. However, RE does not always challenge the most able to attain the highest levels, and so achievement in RE is not as good as in the other core subjects.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Despite coming mainly from non-worshipping families, pupils gather very respectfully for collective worship. Pupils enjoy taking an active part in worship, and particularly enjoy dramatising biblical stories. As a result, pupils' knowledge of bible stories is good. Pupils know about the main events in Jesus' life, and they understand that Christians believe that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In worship, the school's Christian values are related both to their Christian context and to the pupils' lives. This helps pupils to understand the relevance of Christian teaching for their own lives, and contributes to their very good behaviour. Pupils know about the major Christian festivals as these are celebrated in school. The seasons of the church's year are marked by changing the colour of the cloth used in worship. This helps most pupils to gain an understanding of this Anglican tradition. Adults and pupils alike, join in with Anglican responses and prayers. Many pupils write their own prayers, and some are confident enough to read these in collective worship. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on worship themes throughout the school day. This often leads to enthusiastic support for charities, such as 'den day' for Save the Children. The incumbent celebrates the Eucharist at the school each term, as well as regularly leading school worship. Other ministers and Christian groups also sometimes lead worship. Therefore, pupils experience some variety of styles of worship. Governors monitor worship, and pupils regularly feed back their views about collective worship. This has led to improvements, such as the increased use of drama. The development point from the previous denominational inspection, to enable pupils to take more leadership roles in worship, has been partially addressed. Pupils prepare the hall and take an active part in worship, but they seldom plan and lead an act of worship.

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

The headteacher and governors have worked very hard to embed Christian values and to establish the school as a Christian community. The headteacher is very clear that upholding

the school's Christian character is non-negotiable for all staff. As a result, school staff members now have a better understanding of what it means to be a church school. The school environment has been transformed to make abundantly clear the fact that this is a church school. Policies and key documentation are being re-written to include the school's Christian values. This also addresses an issue from the previous denominational inspection. However, the way that the values are written, sometimes as words and sometimes as sentences, is not consistent. Self-evaluation as a church school is honest, and is informed by the views of all stakeholders. The priority that leaders give to developing the Christian character of the school has led to the school being a happy place, as well as to improved behaviour and outcomes. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements and they have an important place in the life of the school community. The RE co-ordinator is supported very well to become a future leader of church schools. She accesses as much training as possible, including that offered by the diocese. Although there is no active Anglican church in Burham, church members are involved in the life of the school, thereby establishing an effective partnership. Parents often attend school worship, particularly the Eucharist. They appreciate the positive impact of the strengthened Christian character on the school.

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