

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Barrow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Colethorpe Lane, Barrow, Suffolk IP29 8AU

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Suffolk

Date of inspection

2 December 2016

Date of last inspection

November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

VC Primary 124690

Headteacher

Helen Ashe

Inspector's name and number

Lizzie McWhirter 244

#### School context

Barrow serves a rural community near Bury St Edmunds. There are 148 pupils on roll, from Reception to Year 4, who are almost all from a White British background with little ethnic diversity. There are a small number of pupils for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or are in receipt of pupil premium funding is below average. There are a small number of pupils whose families serve in HM Armed Forces. The headteacher took up her substantive post in January 2015. The Church School Leader, responsible for collective worship and religious education [RE], known here as beliefs and values, was appointed in the summer of 2015.

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

- This is a welcoming and nurturing Christian family environment which is underpinned by Christian values, such as compassion and trust.
- Highly skilled and experienced staff meet the needs of individual pupils so they grow in confidence and achieve well within this church school.
- The beliefs and values leader ensures that the school's Christian character permeates all school life.
- Inspirational collective worship follows the pattern of gathering, engaging, responding and sending and involves and enriches the whole of this church school community.

#### Areas to improve

- For the governors to formally monitor key aspects of Christian distinctiveness, which encompasses beliefs and values, collective worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development. This maintains excellence and continually improves pupils' lives and learning.
- Enable pupils to deepen their knowledge of Christianity as a worldwide faith and meet people of other faiths more frequently to nurture their spiritual and cultural development.
- Enrich the worshipping life of this church school by enabling pupils to better understand the Trinity.

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

Barrow is truly a welcoming and nurturing Christian family community whose vision and mission is to 'create, discover and inspire together'. This is lived out on a daily basis through Bible based values, such as compassion, forgiveness, generosity of spirit and trust. Moreover, Jesus is offered as the model character for children to reflect

on through their own personal beliefs and values in an inclusive way. Relationships and behaviour are exemplary because children constantly and consistently see excellent role models in all the staff. All children are treated with dignity and respect and this results in well rounded, healthy and spiritual children. Parents praise the fact that 'all the staff like each other and work together' and cite the school as a 'tangibly joyous place'. Approaches and attitudes to learning are extremely positive, with the use of Growth Mind-set, an approach to learning which enables pupils to choose their own level of challenge. There are high expectations for learning where children are taught a thirst for knowledge. This is underpinned by the Christian values of perseverance and courage. Any vulnerable groups are well supported because there is a constant focus on the individual child. Consequently, all children make good progress. By the end of Year 4, attainment is well above local and national averages. The school attributes this to the school being a lead player in the local Teaching School Alliance. As a result, there is a constant focus on effective ways for children to access learning and meaningful pedagogy and training is always a part of every staff meeting. Adults as well as children have a positive attitude to learning because they believe more is always possible. Attendance is good and any exclusions are supported with trust, love and compassion for the children and their families, where relationships are key. Personal spiritual development is highly valued at Barrow. This is developed through collective worship, beliefs and values lessons and SMSC in the curriculum. The pupil collective worship team, comprised of eight pupils, devise an interactive prayer activity each half term. This helps pupils experience and discover their own personal beliefs and values in a creative way. For example, weaving a thread on a pin board to make the shape of a heart when thinking about honesty and generosity. Each week a 'Seedbed' SMSC bulletin goes out to staff, explaining how the current value can be explored through the everyday curriculum. Regular SMSC home learning projects enable parents to engage with the school's values programme at home. This makes an excellent contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' personal development. Pupils have a very good level of religious literacy. They can relate the Christian narrative very well and explain incarnation and salvation in their own words. Reception pupils explore incarnation through role-playing the Nativity story in their church role play area. Good examples include Joseph who noted 'he's woken up' and gave baby Jesus a kiss, offering Jesus to others, whilst some pupils made their own 'mince pie Jesus in the manger'. Year 2 pupils explore Jewish festivals, such as Yom Kippur, and talk about the holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement. They make the link to the Christian values of forgiveness and friendship. Pupils are able to deepen their learning because of the enquiry based approach which engages them in their learning. For example, Year 4 pupils ask important questions, such as the importance of Mohammed and the seal of the prophets. The excellent RE provision through the beliefs and values programme enables those of all faiths and none to be treated with respect. Pupils develop their global awareness and their understanding of their place in the world through charity fundraising. Good examples include the links the school has with the House of Joshua, supporting an orphanage in the Philippines. In addition, the diocesan Kagera project, visits to St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Cathedral, the Lord's Prayer project, the work of the Salvation Army and support for Christian Aid all help pupils develop an understanding of different communities and cultures and of Christianity as a worldwide faith. The school has identified that meeting people of faith more frequently is an area for development in order to enrich these young pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Currently, this does not happen as the local area is one of little ethnic diversity. However the school is working very hard to improve this important aspect of extending pupils' experience of diverse communities and cultures.

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

Inspiring and uplifting collective worship which follows the pattern of gathering, engaging, responding and sending, involves the whole school community. It is very much pupil-led, with children becoming increasingly confident in leading aspects of worship, including reflection, wondering and questioning. Key festivals in the church year, such as Remembrance, also have a strong emphasis on child-led worship. Consequently, such times have a depth of impact in personal spiritual development from Reception to Year 4. Barrow enjoys a range of worship leaders, which include the local 'Open the Book' team. Their fortnightly visits work chronologically through the Bible. Consequently, the whole school community has a stronger understanding of Bible stories and their link to the school values. They focus on what Christians believe in their hearts and minds and how this is translated into action. Many pupils say prayer is the most important aspect of worship for them. They enjoy the space to reflect on events in the world, such as the refugee crisis. They pray for those less fortunate in a biblical, liturgical, symbolic and seasonal way. Class prayer boxes are well used for children to ask the members of the parish church to pray for them. In turn, the children receive prayer requests back from the parish of All Saints. This is one way of showing the impact the church has on the school and the impact the school has on the church. Pupils are also beginning to use intercessory cards to help them pray for different situations in whole school worship. Pupils are growing in their age-appropriate understanding of the trinity. This is helped by the strong focus on celebrating Pentecost every year. Pupils speak of God as 'a really extra special king' and of Jesus as 'God inside a body'. They go on to tell of Jesus 'telling everybody about God and that's how everybody started believing in God.' The school identifies that enriching pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit as part of their experience of worship is part

of the school's plan for future priorities. Worship is meaningful because pupils are involved in its evaluation and this informs future planning.

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

The well-established staff at Barrow are very experienced and committed to promoting the vision and values of the school. This is because they are passionate about the school and are constantly adopting and adapting new resources to help nurture pupils' spiritual development. Indeed, parents testify to this family community which 'lives and breathes values'. This results in pupils growing up as individuals who have strong values for life. Academic and personal development is consequently very good. New members of staff say they have been welcomed and valued into this community where teamwork is underpinned by Christian values, such as forgiveness. Teachers and teaching assistants have very positive relationships encouraged by plenty of team building and events, such as the annual pantomime. All staff are very well supported by their headteacher and the governors who are committed to the wellbeing of the whole community. This includes training and support for all staff as current and future leaders of church schools. Indeed, Barrow is used as a hub for local church and community schools to help develop their ethos. The specialist teacher for beliefs and values is a member of the ethos committee and the collective worship committee which feeds directly into full governing body meetings. She has worked extremely hard in her commitment to this school in a relatively short space of time in one day a week. All staff and governors value her immense contribution, which is instrumental to the school's Christian character embedding all school life. Under her leadership policy and practice is regularly reviewed and all areas from the previous inspection have been well addressed. Beliefs and values is ably led, managed and resourced by this senior specialist lead teacher. She was a member of the writing team for the Emmanuel Suffolk units of work for RE which are well established in this school. Her support extends to other local schools, including community schools, within the West Suffolk Teaching School Alliance. RE and worship more than meet statutory requirements. However, governors recognise the need to monitor beliefs and values, collective worship and SMSC more robustly and rigorously. To this end, each aspect of the school development plan is linked to a commitment to nurture SMSC development. Community links are very strong. This includes the parish church of All Saints and its rector, the Cathedral and the diocese, whose support is welcomed and valued. There is a strong commitment for the church and school to pray for one another. Parents made poppy wreaths with their children and a local artist helped the children make altar frontals for All Saints Church. Parents say they too feel welcomed as partners in their children's education.' Parent Mail' and the half termly 'Barrow Bulletin' celebrate achievements with them and communicate special events, such as church services, which include the annual Christmas tree festival and 'Messy Church'. Parents speak highly of this 'incredibly welcoming family community' which gives their children 'a really solid foundation'.

SIAMS report December 2016 Barrow CE VC Primary School, Barrow, Suffolk, IP29 5AU