

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Burley Gate Church of England Primary School

Burley Gate, Hereford HRI 3QR	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Hereford
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 October 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Bishop Anthony Educational Trust
Date of inspection	24 January 2017
Date of last inspection	11 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Academy (VC) 116788
Headteacher	Beverley Donald
Inspector's name and number	John Chapman 006

School context

Burley Gate is a smaller than average primary school with 84 pupils in 4 mixed age classes. It serves a swathe of rural Herefordshire centred on the village of Burley Gate. 42% of its pupils come from outside the catchment area. The headteacher has been in post since 2009. The local church is some distance away in the neighbouring village of Much Cowarne. In October 2016 the school became a partner member of the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust (BAET), a multi-academy trust for schools in the diocese of Hereford.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Burley Gate as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The shared vision of all school leaders is sharply focussed on promoting Christian values and nurturing every pupil as a child of God.
- The quality of relationships throughout the school stem from its Christian character and this promotes both good learning and spiritual and moral development.
- A warm and caring family atmosphere based on the Christian values of love, trust and respect results in excellent behaviour, attitudes and progress on the part of pupils.
- The centrality of collective worship makes a considerable impact on all aspects of school life and pupils' spiritual development.

Areas to improve

- Give opportunities for pupils to evaluate collective worship in order to deepen their involvement and understanding.
- Ensure governors are fully involved in evaluating religious education (RE), collective worship and the school's Christian distinctiveness in order to better support the school vision.
- Arrange occasional experiences or visits to extend pupils' knowledge and experience of religious and cultural diversity.

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

Explicit Christian values, especially those of love, trust and respect, are embedded in every aspect of life at Burley Gate. These values, together with the value of each month, are well understood by staff and pupils and they form the basis of their shared life together. Pupils are increasingly aware that the school's values are based on the life and teaching of Jesus. The all-embracing family atmosphere ensures the inclusion of all pupils. Parents comment how the school will always go the extra mile to support individual needs. Small nurture groups, based around a cooking activity in some classes, give pupils in turn the opportunity to share thoughts, feelings and concerns in a protected atmosphere. Academic attainment is generally of a high order with most targets meeting national expectations. Pupils and staff share mutual trust and respect. Staff are excellent role models for Christian values and this is sensed by pupils. Behaviour is excellent. It is less to do with obeying rules, which they usually do, but more about the way pupils treat each other and conduct themselves generally. One pupil said this was because 'we have such good teachers and we are in such a good school'. Pupils feel safe and secure, and their record of attendance is excellent. They talk much about how they face challenges together, for example when taking a tumble in the playground or in making the right choice in their behaviour to others. Pupils of different ages are well integrated. In collective worship older and younger pupils sit together in mutual respect rather than in age groups and older pupils help younger ones in numerous ways such as hearing them read. Pupils always give a spontaneous and warm welcome to those who join the school at different stages. The behaviour policy makes clear that it is Christian values which determine the rules of the school. RE makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The values celebrated in worship are explored and reinforced in RE. Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity. They can reflect on their own beliefs and how these beliefs can affect their lives. They find lessons exciting and challenging as they engage in a wide variety of activities. Written work, which is of good quality, shows sensitivity and spiritual understanding as well as knowledge. Staff have shared training on the meaning of spirituality in a school setting which has benefited both pupils and themselves. Christian values and RE enable pupils to understand and respect those of other faiths and cultures. They are aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith along with others, and older pupils are impressively able to distil what all faiths have in common. Activities and teaching within school help pupils develop respect for diverse communities, and Year 6 often share in a multi-faith day with other schools. There are however limited opportunities in this rural setting for pupils to experience the wider world beyond the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. It is essentially the daily occasion when the whole family meets together to celebrate what its members have in common. The hall is the physical centre of the school and in worship becomes its beating heart. Christian values are thoroughly explored on a daily basis. They are explained, illustrated, and reference is made to their biblical origins. Pupils embrace the value of the month, deepen their understanding of it as the weeks go by, until it becomes something they naturally live by. As a result shared collective worship shapes the nature of the whole school community. The value finds echoes in the rest of the school day and what takes place in worship is the most likely topic many pupils will talk about at home. The impact worship makes is in part due to the high level of involvement of pupils themselves. Much of this arises from recommendations from the previous inspection which have been fully implemented. Pupils take pride in lighting the 3 candles to denote God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, read from the Bible, say a prayer or organise the illustrations and songs on the screen. They approach worship reverently, sing with great enthusiasm, and concentrate on what they are hearing. Younger pupils seem better able to maintain their involvement through sitting alongside older pupils and all enjoy answering questions. There is a well-planned variety of worship which follows a carefully reviewed worship policy. It is a strength that all teachers share in leading worship. It is in the nature of a family occasion that adults and youngsters equally feel the impact of what takes place. Pupils say they enjoy all the acts of worship, but speak especially enthusiastically about Come and Praise, the celebration assembly on Fridays and their own emerging house assemblies when they can plan and lead themselves. They also welcome the monthly contributions of the incumbent, 'which can be fun'. Monitoring and evaluating worship by adults is largely informal. There are no opportunities for pupils to offer their thoughts and suggestions in any systematic way. Pupils have an uncomplicated attitude to prayer. They see it as a natural activity, not only in worship but at other times of the day in the classroom. 'Prayer is about life, not just about assembly' said one pupil. They find value in writing their own prayers most typically for those around them at school and home. Some pupils take advantage of the quiet reflection area in the corner of the hall to be alone with their thoughts. The school has its own prayer which is said regularly and is displayed on the notice board at the entrance to the school. Worship follows the

rhythm of the church's year though understandably there are few visits to local churches because of distance. Special to Burley Gate in the period before Christmas is the 'posada'. This Spanish-American custom is when each class welcomes a character from the Christmas nativity scene following which the characters are taken to, and welcomed by, a different class each day in the course of the last two weeks of term. This culminates with carols round the tree in the hall at the end of the week. Worship is primarily Christian though the values that are being promoted may find illustration from other faiths and cultures as well. Pupils are at ease with Anglican responses in some acts of worship which combine formality with informality.

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

Burley Gate is a school with a coherent and confident vision rooted in Christian values. It is a vision which is being steadily implemented and deepened. It is recognised that the dedicated and inspirational leadership of the headteacher over a number of years is an important reason for the school being a happy and successful community. A passion for the well-being of each child characterises her leadership. She is fully supported in this vision by high quality staff and the governing body who all make significant contributions. The statement that 'school life is conducted through the lens of our Christian values which are known to all' reflects the reality. Central to the vision is the belief that the practice of Christian values creates the best atmosphere for learning allowing each pupil to reach his or her full potential. Academic attainment is for the most part good and the school is always looking for ways to improve its performance. The current school development plan focusses mainly on core academic subjects and there is little relating to the Christian character of the school or to RE. Staff, with their different strengths but common purpose, form a united team. They know all the children, support each other, and show consistency in their support for the school's values. They provide excellent nurture and pastoral care and promote the school's vision through careful teaching and leading worship. Pupils too see themselves as having a stake in the school's management. Their pride in the school finds expression in the school council. Pupils vote for their class representatives who together make suggestions for the good running of school life. The creation of the quiet reflection area came from the council as have some suggestions for fundraising to support causes they feel strongly about. RE is given appropriate time and resource. It is taught by the headteacher and two visiting teachers indicating the importance the school attaches to RE. Pupils display good knowledge of Christianity and empathy with the teaching of other faiths. A tracking system whereby the progress of each pupil can be monitored has recently been introduced. The governing body has many strengths and overall provides the school with effective challenge and support. Governors are part of the family and they are fully supportive of the school's vision. They have supported the transition to academy status in BAET and are already aware of the benefits this is bringing. They look forward to sharing best practice and continuing to develop church school leaders through ongoing links with the diocese and other BAET schools. There is no mechanism by which governors are involved in monitoring or evaluating collective worship or RE. They rely mainly for information from the headteacher's reports and RE and worship are not generally agenda items in themselves. This may be because the governing body deals with everything in its main meetings rather than through committees. Two-way links between local churches and the school are made difficult by the distance to the nearest church and the very large number of parishes which supply a handful of pupils. This link is something both school and church miss out on. Nonetheless the incumbent makes a good contribution both as a governor and to collective worship. He notes that when adolescents offer to help in his various church services 'they are usually ex-Burley Gaters'. Parents have extremely positive views of the school and almost a half have chosen it rather than a school nearer to where they live. They find the school accessible and staff welcoming and they are kept well-informed. They are clear how the school is based on its Christian values and the impact for good this has on their children. 'Such a lovely family atmosphere' said one.

SIAMS report January 2017 Burley Gate Primary School, Burley Gate, Hereford HRI 3QR

