

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

### Beechwood Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Beechwood Road, Dudley, DY2 7QA	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Worcester</b>
Previous inspection grade	N/A
Date of academy conversion	1 July 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	DRB Ignite Multi Academy Trust
Date of inspection	9 February 2017
Date of last inspection	N/A
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary 142047
Executive headteacher	Kevin McCabe
Head of school	Hilary Wheeldon
Inspector's name and number	C. Ann Stone 812

#### School context

Beechwood CE Primary, formally St Edmund and St John Primary School, converted to a sponsored academy in July 2016. This followed two years in an Ofsted category resulting in the removal of the senior leadership team. A new leadership team and an interim executive board were appointed in July 2016 to lead and manage the school which has resulted in some changes in staffing and governorship. The school has 210 children on roll and is set in an urban location of high deprivation. The proportion of children entitled to Pupil Premium funding and those with special educational needs is above the national average and about one third of the children are from minority ethnic groups. One of the parish churches linked to the school is temporarily closed and the other without clergy.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Beechwood Primary School as a Church of England School are satisfactory.

- The leadership team have a clear strategy for moving the school forward as a church school.
- The great value placed on respect and support for all stakeholders impacts positively on the life of the school.
- The religious education lessons challenge children to think for themselves leading to good spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that the newly introduced Christian values are deeply embedded within the whole life of the school so that they have an impact on the lives of all members of the school community.
- Develop the shared understanding of spirituality so that children are engaged in a range of planned spiritual experiences allowing them to deepen their own personal spirituality.
- Formalise the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and all areas of the school's Christian character in order to ensure that children and governors are fully involved.

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

Following a long period of instability the school now has a leadership team who have a clear action plan to move the school forward as a church school. Identified in the school development plan are clear action points to increase the Christian distinctiveness of the school. A new set of Christian values have been discussed and agreed on by all stakeholders, although they have not yet been embedded into daily school life. The school recognises that, once embedded, these are expected to enhance the children's understanding of ways in which Christian values can have a positive impact on all areas of life. The motto 'Living, loving, learning together' appears on the website and other documentation but is not widely understood in the context of a Christian education. One child explained that the motto was 'so we can learn to be a good person' but children are less confident in their ability to link this to the understanding that all is possible with God's help.

Pastoral care for staff, children and parents is a notable strength of the school. Staff have been treated with compassion, honesty and respect during the protracted conversion to an academy. Parents appreciate the support given in times of family crisis and children know there is an 'open door policy' when they need help. The behaviour of the children is of the highest standard and relationships between children good. Several members of staff directly attribute this to the Christian character of the school.

Fundraising supports local, national and global charities. However, such activities are not routinely understood as being an outworking of Christian values. Supporting a child through the 'World Vision' charity is resulting in children appreciating and respecting global diversity.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of spirituality and the school has identified the need for more opportunities within the curriculum to deepen this understanding, allowing children to make their own links between beliefs, practices and Christian values. There is not yet, however, a clear definition of spirituality which the school community shares. Consequently, children's development in this area is limited. The school has links with the local community through the 'Jasmine Road Garden Project' but opportunities are missed to explore ways in which this project could enable children to develop spiritually.

Parents and governors are welcomed in school and parents comment that the Christian values which staff show to children contribute well to behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.**

Collective worship is important to the life of the school and is seen by some to contribute to and support the school's Christian distinctiveness. It is planned using the 'Imaginer' series of books and major religious festivals in Christianity and other world faiths are explored. Senior leaders and teaching staff lead worship and see it as a way to demonstrate their commitment as a team to promote the Christian character of the school. The parish priest occasionally led worship but has recently left the parish and the school recognises the need to involve visitors from the churches of St Edmund and St John, other local places of worship and the community to lead worship. A teaching assistant is now responsible for improving links with the local and other faith communities.

Children enjoy worship but there is limited evidence of the impact which it has on their daily lives. They are developing the ability to explain the differences between different Christian values and the link these have to biblical material. This is expected, in time, to have an impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but the impact is not yet evident. Symbolic Christian artefacts and a coloured cloth representing the colours of the church year are displayed on a worship table but children are not yet able to clearly articulate what they mean to Christians.

Links with the parish church community are limited mainly due to the closure of St John's and the departure of the parish priest. However, the church is still used to celebrate the major festivals of Christmas and Easter. All classrooms have a 'multi faith area' which celebrates the faiths of all the children and contains bibles, faith symbols, artefacts, prayer bags or bears.

Children recognise the 'Lord's Prayer' and it is used in some acts of worship but not with a great degree of understanding. Other prayers are used during the school day and younger children are confident in using a 'Prayer Bear' to help them focus their thoughts. As a result, children are beginning to understand the importance of prayer in their own lives. Collective worship includes the teachings of Jesus Christ and children are able to talk about him with a good degree of understanding. They have a developing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but are not yet able to make the links between the Bible and lessons for their own lives. Children have no understanding of the Eucharist and the importance it plays in the lives of Christians.

'Worship journals', where children write about the content of collective worship, have been recently introduced. This initiative is currently too new to be able to discern any impact. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is not formally carried out, although some informal monitoring has taken place. Consequently, leaders have not been

able to identify where improvement is needed and use this information to inform planning. The school has identified the need for children to be more involved in the planning, monitoring, delivering and evaluation of worship. Parents are invited to attend church services and achievement worship in school and value these opportunities.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**

The school has clearly acknowledged the importance of religious education (RE) and the subject has a high profile within the curriculum. It is recognised by staff, governors, parents and children as being important to the life of the school. Children enjoy their lessons and are able to link their learning to how they should live their lives. Parents remark how often children talk about their RE lessons and, in particular, their understanding of a range of faiths. The RE subject leader is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and attends diocesan training. She ensures standards are high, lessons challenging and has provided training for staff where appropriate. The school has identified the need to formalise lesson observations, undertake learning walks and the scrutiny of work books. Following consultation with the interim executive board (IEB) the school has also decided to implement the Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus to enable leaders to introduce a more focussed approach to the teaching of RE and to have more involvement with diocesan training and support.

Staff plan RE lessons which allow children the opportunity to reflect, ask questions, offer opinions and help understand the impact religion has on believers. Children actively engage in their learning and are beginning to recognise the contribution it makes to their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

Understanding of some of the teachings of Christianity is secure although the need to develop children's understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith has been identified by the school. Implementation of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource is intended to address this. Opportunities are given for children to learn about other faiths through sharing experiences, direct teaching and visits to places of worship. An example seen was Year One Muslim children confidently talking about and demonstrating how they pray. As a result, children's knowledge and understanding of cultures and faiths which are different to their own is of a high standard.

Progress and achievement of all children is tracked and evidence shows that the majority of children are making good progress. The governor responsible for RE is involved in informal monitoring and evaluating but the absence of a more formal system means that there is a lack of clear understanding at governor level of the school's performance and Christian distinctiveness and the identification of future developments.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory.**

The leadership team shows vision and commitment for the development and improvement of the school. They have already demonstrated exceptional focus and determination to build a confident team, empower staff and release their potential. Less secure is the way in which the team's vision for the school is rooted in Christian teaching and faith. However, the understanding of the leadership team of how they expect Christian values to make a difference is driving current work to ensure that these are at the heart of all areas of development.

Members of the IEB know the school and articulate well the understanding of their role as strategic leaders. Not yet secure is the understanding of their role as strategic leaders of a *church* school although they do have a growing understanding of the SIAMS framework. Acknowledged by the IEB and leadership team is the fact that the school is the only church school in the DRB Ignite multi academy trust (MAT). They consider this an opportunity and plan that the Christian distinctiveness of Beechwood Primary School will be shared with the other academies within the MAT in the future. The IEB has little experience in monitoring and evaluating the school's distinctive Christian character and has identified this as an area for development.

Parents know their views are welcomed and valued and state that the ability to speak to the headteacher or a senior member of staff ensures that any problems are dealt with sensitively and immediately.

The development of staff as leaders in this church school is achieved through individual support, attendance at diocesan training, and support of each other. School leaders and the IEB ensure both worship and RE meet statutory requirements.

The supportive relationships between all members of the school community are clearly rooted in Christian values. This foundation is expected to enable leaders to implement new strategies to lead the school to one which they intend to be both distinctive and highly effective.