THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

The Methodist Church

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Primary School	
Bodenham, Hereford HR1 3JU	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	**Good**
Diocese	**Hereford**
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Date of academy conversion	1 October 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	Bishop Anthony Educational Trust
Date of inspection	16 March 2017
Date of last inspection	20 March 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 143455
Acting headteacher	Elizabeth Alty
Inspector's name and number	Susan Blackburn 756

School context

St Michael's is a smaller than average rural primary school with 69 pupils on roll, most of whom are from white British backgrounds. Pupils are taught in four classes. Only a small number of pupils are eligible for support through pupil premium funding. The percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register is in line with those nationally. The school has recently become a part of the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust and the acting headteacher has been in post since October 2016. The school has strong links with the local church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's as a Church of England school are good

- The acting headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school underpinned by Christian values of respect and trust. Her strong leadership has provided stability during a period of change.
- Excellent relationships, informed by Christian values and cultivated by nurturing staff, which encourage pupils to develop as caring and respectful young people.
- The creation of a reflective and prayerful environment, which enables the whole school community to deepen its spirituality.

Areas to improve

- Involve the foundation governors in formally monitoring and evaluating the distinctiveness of the school as a church school, including the standards of achievement in religious education and the effectiveness of collective worship.
- Increase the amount of written work in religious education (RE) books to reflect the good practice in classrooms and give pupils opportunities to formally assess their work.

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

The Christian values of respect and trust are embedded in the life of this happy school. They are promoted by the acting headteacher as the school's key values. Pupils can articulate the impact of recent teaching of this on their own behaviour. They say the half termly values promoted in worship help them to think and focus on what they could do better. As a result of the culture of praise and reward throughout the school, pupils behave exceptionally well. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming. The concept of forgiveness and reconciliation is central to behaviour management. Parents commented that pupils were more able to reconcile disputes following the clear focus on forgiveness as a core value explored this term.

Pupils achieve well due to the strong teaching throughout the school. Parents rightly believe that the high quality teaching combined with care for each individual, enables their children to flourish. In many areas of school life pupils have opportunities to develop their spirituality. They are encouraged to work together and to understand how their actions affect other people. They are challenged to explore and to develop their own beliefs. Pupils support each other in lessons and on the playground. Older pupils pair up with the youngest children and take care of them. Parents view the family atmosphere of the school positively and see this as a strength. Their achievements and God-given talents are recognised and celebrated both within and outside of school. Pupils are given opportunities, both within the RE curriculum and in church services, to learn about and celebrate major Christian events and festivals.

Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are good. The pupils feel safe and they enjoy coming to school. The school provides a nurturing environment and has put in place strategies to improve the attendance of groups of pupils. Pupils have a developing understanding of Christianity as a world faith. They understand that knowing about other faiths and cultures enables them to respect different people's viewpoints. The established link with a school in Tanzania has provided first hand opportunities for pupils to question adults about life in a Tanzanian school in the past. Strengthening this link further is something the school has identified as a development point.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils' behaviour and engagement during collective worship is good. Pupils say they particularly enjoy participating in worship when they are given opportunities to take part in acting out stories from the Bible. The school is well supported in the delivery of collective worship. The local vicar leads worship in school on a monthly basis and also attends worship in half termly church services which parents are invited to join. Parents value these opportunities to engage in worship with their children, which reflects the strong family ethos of the school. Pupils are invited to offer their work to God to be blessed during the service. Pupils have the opportunity to visit the local cathedral and another local church which provides additional opportunities to deepen their understanding of Anglican traditions. Worship has a strong Christian focus. Pupils are engaged in leading aspects of worship such as the lighting of the candle to indicate the start of worship and they are familiar with Anglican practices such as the greeting and response which they also lead. Prayer and time for reflection is encouraged. Prayer trees in classrooms are used regularly to help children think about their relationship with God. Pupils actively engage in prayer. They all know the Lord's prayer, which they recite confidently. They write thoughtful prayers which are displayed on the prayer tree and demonstrate their ability to reflect on their behaviour and to ask God for forgiveness. Parents commented that their children also write and say prayers at home as a result of the focus on the prayer model. The prayer share book, whereby prayers are written by pupils and sent into church and then prayers are written by members of the church community are sent in the book into school, provides positive links between the school and local community. Pupils are regularly encouraged to share their own prayers based on the 'thank you sorry please' model. Pupils like this structure and say it helps them to write their own prayers more easily. Worship centres on Christian values which are explored for half a term and focus on how they can impact on daily life. Pupils are encouraged to respond to worship and their views are collected. Their responses are mainly a description of the worship rather than an evaluation of it with ideas for improvement. The foundation governors have visited the school regularly. One is only recently appointed and is developing her role. Currently they are not engaged in evaluating worship or involved in developing or improving it. Members of the local church are involved in leading worship and also lead the choir who have opportunities to sing at local events and competitions. As a result of this involvement some pupils join the church choir and become more engaged with the local church.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school follows the Herefordshire syllabus for RE. This ensures pupils gain a good understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. Learners say they enjoy RE lessons and have particularly enjoyed exploring the variety of

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Christian values including love, honesty, peace and forgiveness. The school uses a variety of approaches and contexts for RE. RE makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and emotional development. The recent training on developing spirituality in school has enabled pupils to articulate their understanding of their own beliefs. Opportunities are provided for pupils to ask big questions and explore the meaning of aspects of religion such as creation. The school has implemented an assessment system recently in order to monitor the progress of pupils in RE. Pupils are encouraged to become involved in self-assessment and the process is in its infancy. The RE coordinator has identified the need to increase the opportunities for more formal recording of pupils' responses during RE. This will provide more opportunities for work to be more formally monitored. Teaching and learning are good. Effective questioning enables pupils to debate and explore their own understanding further. Pupils are engaged in lessons and collaborate well with each other. In exploring what is important to value, pupils discussed their reasoning and listened to each other before grouping their ideas. Learners are provided with frequent opportunities to explore key ideas during RE and were articulate in discussing similarities and differences between values in different religions. Visits to the local church provide first hand opportunities to look at religious artefacts and witness ceremonies to enhance the teaching of RE. The school has registered for training in 'Understanding Christianity' to enhance the RE teaching throughout the school.

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

The acting head teacher is clear what the school needs to do to improve. She knows the school well and has established positive relationships with all members of the school community. She is a well-established member of staff who provides care and support for staff and pupils. She has managed changes of membership of the governing body as well as stepping up to the acting headship role. Governors are regular visitors to the school. Governors say that 'every child is valued as one of God's children' and that there is a strong ethos of 'love thy neighbour as thyself.' Developing and engaging new members of the governing body in self-evaluation and monitoring is a current focus for the school. Development planning is sharply focussed on school improvement of the school as a church school. The acting head teacher is also the RE and collective worship coordinator. In this role she has provided clear leadership in developing an assessment system for RE, which was a development point from the previous inspection. She has also adopted the Herefordshire syllabus for RE in response to an additional development point from the previous inspection.

The acting head teacher has undertaken self-evaluation of the school as a church school with staff which has been shared with governors. Monitoring of collective worship and RE takes place. Evaluation leading to improvement is not yet embedded with foundation governors. The school's mission statement was developed with the school community. It is not yet actively promoted so that many members of the community know it exists but not what it stands for. The school community are very aware of the Christian values shared during weekly worship and are clear as to the impact the focus on these values has on pupil's behaviour. Although parents and governors are aware of these Christian values being promoted they are unable to name those as key values for the school.

The school has engaged with staff training in spirituality with the diocese which has enabled the school to develop pupils' understanding of their own beliefs effectively. The school joined the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust in order to strengthen links with other church schools. These links with other schools in the multi academy trust, as well as other local schools, are effectively used to share good practice. Parents and members of the local church come into school regularly to support reading and the choir. The school provides a variety of opportunities to enhance the curriculum. A popular after school club is led by a member of a local church and parents value the opportunities provided for their children before and after school.

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