



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Brimscombe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Brimscombe Hill, Brimscombe, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 2QR

**Previous inspection grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Gloucester**

Local authority: Gloucestershire

Date of inspection: 5 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 7 March 2011

School's unique reference number: 115690

Headteacher: Karen Riordan

Inspector's name and number: Stephanie Boulter 785

#### **School context**

Brimscombe VA is a smaller than average primary school with 96 pupils on roll, with most pupils coming from a white British background. The school has a part time pre-school playgroup which is managed by the governing body. The proportion of pupils designated as having special needs is below average and pupil mobility is high especially at Key stage Two.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Brimscombe as a Church of England school are good**

- Core Christian values inform behaviour and relationships which result in caring pupils who are 'Christ like' in the way they live their lives and care for others
- Totally inclusive relationships encourage pupils to have self worth and show a love of others exemplified by their charity work and strong global links with the Gambia
- The behaviour of pupils is exemplary

#### **Areas to improve**

- Further develop the work of the recently formed ethos committee to ensure robust formal monitoring and evaluation of Brimscombe as a church school so that the impact of its distinctive Christian character is reviewed by all stakeholders
- Review strategies for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning in religious education (RE) throughout the school so that these lead directly to improvements which are underpinned by a strong evidence base
- Develop prayer and reflection areas in classrooms and around the school so that pupils can regularly write their own prayers and increase their understanding of the purpose of reflection so that their own spiritual journey can be further developed

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

Brimscombe is an inclusive community where pupils think of others before themselves. The 'Values for Life' and the four core Christian values of courage, respect, thankfulness and forgiveness are firmly linked to Bible teachings and the life of Jesus. As a result pupils understand that these values are signposts as to how they should live and treat others and therefore they try to live out these values in their everyday life. Parents state that their children are supported and nurtured in a caring and supportive Christian environment which enables their children to grow in confidence and feel safe and secure in school. One parent commented 'the school's Christian ethos encourages children to speak out against injustice and all families are supported and loved as part of the school family'. As a result of the school's distinctive Christian character pupils value each other and are passionate about their global partnership with Kanuma in the Gambia which has a Muslim foundation. Pupils' understanding of the core Christian value of 'thankfulness' is exemplified by their commitment to make life better in Kanuma by raising money to provide them with a new water pump. One pupil said 'we need to help others, because our life is easy and we should be thankful that we have safe water to drink all the time, when they do not'. Relationships at all levels are strong and caring, with pupils continually supporting worldwide disasters by collecting money and donating harvest products to local projects like their community foodbank. Most pupils have a clear understanding of the Christian teaching which inspires helping others. The school has a close relationship with the local church and this is helping to develop pupils' awareness of the school's distinctive character. The school's collective understanding of spirituality is shared by most stakeholders, with some planned opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality in most curriculum areas. The impact of these opportunities however, is not robustly monitored and consequently, they are limited in strengthening the Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness of Brimscombe as a church school.

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

Collective worship is recognised as being important to the life of the school and is both valued and enjoyed by the pupils. Christian festivals are celebrated throughout the year, with pupils' understanding of the church year being enhanced by liturgical colours being displayed on the worship table. Pupils participate willingly and enjoy the 'Open the Book' team from the parish church. There are increasing opportunities for pupils from all years to lead worship on a regular basis and as a result, pupils feel valued and included as an integral part of the worshipping life of the school. During worship the school's core Christian values are set in their Christian context resulting in pupils having a deeper understanding of the Christian significance of these values. Pupils have a developing understanding of key Christian beliefs, such as that of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the symbolism of three candles lit at the beginning of worship. One pupil said confidently 'we are God's spirit when we help others'. The different functions of prayer and uses for reflection are understood by pupils, with many expressing a wish to further expand on areas both inside and outside for their use and so enhance opportunities for spiritual development. Suggestions made by pupils are valued and listened to. There is evidence of the positive impact worship has made on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships around the school; but the impact of worship on the spiritual development of all pupils is not adequately monitored or evaluated by all leaders so as to enhance opportunities for all pupils' development in this area. The local vicar, who is also a governor leads worship regularly. These occasions give positive messages about the strong relationship that exists between church and school.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

Pupils have a positive view of RE and demonstrate a good understanding of the main concepts of the Christian faith, with standards of attainment being in line with national expectations. However, not all pupils understand the aims and purpose of RE in connection to big questions about life: neither are they acquiring subject specific vocabulary nor developing key skills such

as enquiry, analysis, evaluation and interpretation. This results in some pupils having a limited ability to apply these skills to their understanding of the impact of religion on believers. Standards of teaching are varied and sometimes lack pace and challenge. The RE curriculum offers pupils good opportunities to develop their understanding of Christianity but the study of other world faiths is inconsistent and therefore pupils' knowledge and understanding of these other world faiths are not fully consolidated throughout both key stages. Formal strategies for monitoring and evaluating standards of teaching and learning in RE by a range of leaders has not been fully developed, especially regarding challenge and depth of learning across the school; this results in standards of teaching and learning not being confidently known with any certainty and targeted improvement not being made possible. The link governor for RE has previously reported on standards, and the recently formed ethos committee has recently formulated a development plan to further inform their monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of RE throughout the school.

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

The headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school and knows how this positively impacts on pupils and their personal and academic development. The partnership with parents is strong and they speak positively of how their children are 'proud' of their school and how they are nurtured in a Christian environment and cared for as unique children of God. There is a well developed understanding of Christian distinctiveness across the whole school community which results in great emphasis being placed on caring not only for pupils but their families too. There are particularly close and effective links between the school and the church. The vicar and Open the Book team from the local parish are regular visitors and are closely involved in reinforcing the school's distinctive Christian values. Good use is made of diocesan training opportunities for staff and governors to ensure future succession planning, and all staff are role models for pupils and enjoy a sense of belonging to a supportive team. The development points from the previous inspection have been addressed. RE meets statutory requirements as does collective worship. Governors now monitor and evaluate the distinctive Christian character of the school through the recently formed ethos committee. The vision and values of Brimscombe as a church school however need to be made more explicit in all school policies so that the core Christian values are at the heart of everything the school does. The outstanding links with the church ensure the school is at the heart of the community and that pupils understand the involvement and importance of the church in the local and wider global context.

SIAMS report February 2016 Brimscombe C of E VA Primary School GL5 2QR