

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

### **Bardwell Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

School Lane, Bardwell, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 1AD	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>St Edmundsbury and Ipswich</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 August 2016
Name of multi-academy trust	The Tilian Partnership
Date of inspection	30 November 2016
Date of last inspection	16 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Academy 143056
Principal Head of School	Andrew Berry Claire Dunnell Paley
Inspector's name and number	David Bunkell 815

#### **School context**

Since the previous inspection the age range of the school has changed. Pupils aged 11 left for the first time in July 2015. In September 2015 the school established a federation with three other local church schools, the Tilian Partnership. In August 2016 this became a multi-academy trust (MAT). The school's name remains unchanged. A principal oversees the four schools; a head of school is responsible on a day-to-day basis. The trust has an overall governance board and the school its own governance committee, including parents and local clergy. The school is currently attended by 61 pupils in three classes.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bardwell Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good**

- The school has a caring, family ethos, firmly based on Christian principles.
- The principal, head of school and the two levels of governance work efficiently together to ensure that Christian values are always at the heart of all decisions, to the benefit of all pupils.
- Strong links with the local church and community ensure that the school is valued in the village, and that pupils are proud to attend a successful and effective church school.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Create opportunities for pupils to join with those from the other schools in the Tilian Partnership to widen their experiences of collective worship and the benefits they derive by attending a Church of England school.
- Extend the links already in place between the school and the diocese, including through participation in events for pupils designed to enrich their understanding of diverse Christian communities.
- Seek ways to combine pupils' own experience of prayer with the prayerful life of the local church to enhance pupils' individual spiritual journeys.

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

The Christian values of the school, such as compassion, forgiveness and service, are at all times explicit and permeate all aspects of school life. These values are displayed in corridors, classrooms and the hall, and also outside. Pupils pointed out the tablet recording the establishment of the school in 1855 by a benefactor from the local church. They said that her nearby full-size portrait was missed when temporarily removed while redecoration took place. Pupils thrive in this environment and enjoy coming to school; as a result, progress is good and attendance rates are high. Families for whom regular, punctual attendance may be difficult have benefited from the compassionate and patient approach that is used to help them. The values of trust and endurance have created an atmosphere in which pupils are prepared to try, and to persevere without fear of failing. As a result, attainment and progress are generally in line with national expectations, including for pupils who may be at any disadvantage. With only a few pupils in each year group, published data can be misleading; only one of the six pupils in Year 6 at the end of the last school year attained the nationally expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined, and had made the nationally expected progress since the end of Key Stage 1. However, evidence shows that all six of these pupils made good progress in the year leading up to the tests. Data indicates that rates of progress throughout the school are now good. Pupils show a highly-developed level of spiritual development. They are proud of their school and its varied outdoor environment which provides many places where they enjoy the opportunity to reflect or pray. A shelter is decorated with crosses made by pupils, and a nearby willow dome has leaves attached with pupils' prayers. The Forest School area has a line strung between trees, with prayers written on cloths. Pupils explained that this was based on prayer flags used in Tibet by Buddhists, adapted here for Christian use. Although living in a largely mono-cultural area, pupils show a mature understanding of other cultures and beliefs, fostered by religious education (RE). Pupils said that it was important to understand such matters so as to be able to respect other people. A recent visit by a Hindu speaker has further extended their knowledge of other faiths and cultures in the UK. Love, respect and tolerance underpin expectations of behaviour and as a result relationships are excellent. Pupils always behave very well, and were seen to go out of their way to care for each other, being particularly responsive to the needs of younger children on the playground and in lunch. They said that although sometimes they fall out with one another, they always make friends again soon, say sorry and forgive each other as a result of their understanding of reconciliation, which they link to the teachings of Jesus and messages from collective worship. The school's Christian values and character play a major part in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The staff handbook makes clear from the start that the Christian ethos is paramount, and throughout makes references to Christian values with regard to expectations of staff. As a result all adults are excellent role models, consistently using the vocabulary of these values and praising pupils when they display the values. The values are woven across the curriculum. Members of the school council proudly listed the many local and international charities that they have supported, understanding the responsibility, compassion and sacrifices of charitable giving. They were particularly proud of the part they had played recently in planting many trees in the village, some saying that if they remain in the local area as adults they will be able to show the mature trees to future generations. RE is an important part of the curriculum. Pupils say it helps them to know how to lead their lives, providing opportunities to look at how faith influences choices about behaviour, and reinforcing the Christian foundation of the values explored in worship, exploring Christianity as a world-wide family with a variety of traditions.

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

Collective worship (CW) is an essential and transformational part of each school day, greatly valued by pupils and adults, as is shown by the many CW monitoring forms regularly completed by a full range of people in the school community. These forms are carefully scrutinised by staff and governors to help with the planning of future CW, such as the choice of relevant themes. All teaching staff regularly lead CW. In conversation with a pupil early during the inspection visit, the inspector was specifically invited to attend CW, seeing this as the highlight of the day. All pupils are keen to participate by answering questions knowledgeably in CW, and by enthusiastically singing worship songs or the Lord's Prayer. CW always starts with a Christian greeting and the lighting of a candle, on this occasion the first on the Advent wreath. Pupils knew that the central candle depicts Jesus as the light of the world. They were able to explain why the cloth on the altar was now purple, one saying that this indicated 'leading up to a special time'. They understood the significance of other colours earlier in the term. Christian teaching is at the centre of CW, often based on biblical material. In discussion, pupils recalled Bible stories, for example the story of the poor widow who gave all that she had, making her a better person than a rich man who gave little. They showed that they understood the difference between giving and sacrificial giving, and compared this with their own charitable fundraising. Pupils said that messages in worship often make them change their attitudes, and had helped them to understand why they see Jesus as a great role model whose lifestyle they can try to emulate. Pupils are familiar with the seasons of the Church year, explaining the significance in one display of a palm cross with the events of Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter. In describing the Trinitarian theology of God, they said that the Holy Spirit is 'the part of God inside each of us', and that we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Pupils' aspirations are raised by themes for CW being firmly linked to Christian values. CW always includes a time for

personal reflection, and prayers are said before lunch in addition to being an essential part of CW. Pupils explained that they found it helpful to write and say their own prayers, placing them in reflection areas in classrooms, or in relevant outside areas. When CW takes place in the church, pupil prayers are often left there, but this is not done routinely. CW regularly takes place in the church, where occasionally it takes the form of a Eucharist. Some pupils said that they were already looking forward to the next of these services in the Spring, describing the benefit they had received from participation in a previous Eucharist. The oldest pupils regularly plan and lead some times of CW. They are adept at creating and leading prayers to fit a theme for worship, and to choose relevant worship songs and Bible stories. A good range of leaders conduct CW, including clergy and a churchwarden. Pupils said that they particularly enjoy the fortnightly 'Open the Book' sessions, which they said really makes the Bible relevant to them.

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

Leaders have focused on ensuring that the Christian values remain at the forefront of all that happens in the school. The school's aims and mission statement are reviewed annually with staff and governors to ensure that this Christian vision is shared by all. New staff are appointed who can show that they too will be committed to the Christian ethos, as questions about this are included at interview. Pupils' views are considered through the school council. Local church members including clergy and a churchwarden form a good proportion of the Bardwell governance committee, and a foundation governance committee meets termly to ensure the continued Christian distinctiveness of the four schools and to help prepare for SIAMS inspections. An entire meeting earlier this year was devoted to SIAMS with a representative of the diocesan education staff. A calm and purposeful environment has a very positive impact on the lives of pupils and the success of the school as a whole. This is fully in accordance with the school's overarching aim to 'believe that children are "Learning for Life" supported by a Christian ethos which fosters their physical, intellectual, moral, social and spiritual development.' The Christian ethos is evident in the value placed on worship, and in the benefit to pupils of time provided for them to pause and think. Every child is thoroughly known as an individual, and leaders fully understand the school's performance and Christian distinctiveness, as shown in thorough, regular self-evaluation involving staff and governors. Particularly effective is the dual level of governance, the trust board providing a strategic analysis and oversight of the partnership as a whole, and the local governance committee honing in to issues pertinent to this school. As a result the needs of every pupil are well met. The governors have recently won local and national awards for their effectiveness. Minutes of meetings confirm that the Christian distinctiveness is central, and is a priority when regularly reviewing policies. The first sentence of the teaching and learning policy includes 'within the context of Christian belief and practice', and monitoring by governors ensures that this remains paramount. The Tilian Partnership's own training for new governors constantly reiterates the place of Christian values in the schools and the work of governors. Core values are woven into all areas of the curriculum, with space for pupils to consider how these values impact on their own lives and the lives of others. As a result, standards of pupil behaviour are high, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced. Parents are highly supportive of all that the school does, as seen in conversation with them and in the latest parent survey, which included a specific question about sharing Christian values. Parents were unanimous in responding positively. Many parents attend the CW sessions to which they are invited, particularly when held in the church. In conversation parents said how important these events are to them, and how it enables them to be more fully involved in the Christian life of the school. The future viability of a small school has been ensured by the partnership with other schools, and the recent conversion to academy status to give greater control of finances and to ensure that the Christian ethos remains paramount. Current and future leaders benefit from opportunities for staff development to maintain the position of church schools, some of which is led by the principal, recognised nationally as a school leader. On behalf of the Suffolk and Norfolk Teaching School Alliance he supported the diocese's application to form a MAT. He is now listed in that trust's handbook as a source of advice. All newly-qualified teachers attend a course on teaching RE led by a diocesan advisor. Although pupils from the four schools have taken part in combined musical and sporting events, they have not met for worship, or to celebrate their joint Christian ethos. Links with the local church are particularly strong in terms of personnel and the use of the church building. The incumbent is seen regularly in school, leading CW there in addition to at the church. A churchwarden is a member of the governance team and also leads the 'Open the Book' team and other CW. The school is on the agenda for every meeting of the PCC, regularly included in Sunday intercessions and some pupils call in at the church on their way home to have a further time of reflection. The PCC was fully involved in the process of forming the local MAT, and this process strengthened the partnership between the school and church. Links with the local community are also strong, with school news and contributions by pupils taking an extremely prominent place in the monthly 'Bardwell Village News' magazine, helping to celebrate more widely pride in the school's Christian foundation and the effectiveness of the school's ethos. Although links with the diocese are effective in terms of membership of the governing boards; use of the Emmanuel Project for RE and help with materials for school Eucharists, many pupils said that they had never been to the cathedral in Bury St Edmunds, although it is only some ten miles away. Arrangements for RE and CW meet all statutory requirements.