

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Long Bennington Church of England Academy

Main Road, Long Bennington, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG23 5EH	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Lincoln
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Name of single academy trust	Long Bennington Church of England Academy
Date of academy conversion	4 September 2012
Date of inspection	4 May 2018
Date of last inspection	18 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	138057
Headteacher	Becky King
Inspector's name and number	Yvonne Shaw 245

School context

Long Bennington Academy is an average sized primary school with 265 children on roll. The academy has not yet been inspected by Ofsted. There has been a significant change of staff since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher. Children attend the school from Long Bennington and the adjacent village of Foston. The proportion of children eligible for pupil premium funding is significantly below national average as is the proportion of children who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The overwhelming majority of children are from White British background having English as a first language.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Long Bennington Academy as a Church of England school are good

- The headteacher's drive and vision for the school has brought about change. With the full support of staff, governors, parents, carers and children, she has re-established the Christian character of the school.
- Based on its key values, explored within a Christian context, there is a calm learning environment where the majority of children achieve well from their starting points.
- Children's behaviour is very good and relationships across the school are strong reflecting both the belief that 'we are our brother's keeper' and the school's Christian and inclusive culture.
- Collective worship is having an increasingly positive impact on participants' knowledge and understanding of the school's Christian values of love, hope, thankfulness, peace, respect, justice, trust, endurance, and humility.

Areas to improve

- Develop systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the school's distinctively Christian character which are robust and which enable the precise identification of outcomes for improvement that can be swiftly acted upon thus enabling governors to hold leaders fully to account for this aspect of the school's work.
- Ensure that there is consistency in the way Christian values and their impact on academic, personal development and welfare are understood and articulated by the school community.
- Introduce greater richness in the worship and prayer life of the school, whatever the setting for acts of worship, and realise the school's plans to create a Christian Council, enabling children to be more actively engaged as leaders through enriching their opportunities to plan, engage, deliver and evaluate acts of worship.

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

The school vision 'Be the best that we can be' is underpinned by a core set of Christian values firmly rooted in Biblical teaching. These values are now embedded and strongly influence all aspects of school life. Members of the school community talk positively about the values and the significant impact that they have throughout the school. As one person noted, 'The values marble through to the heart of all that we do.' Children develop a strong sense of self-worth and respect for each other based upon these values. They clearly talk about how the link between them and the teachings of Jesus are the basis for how they should live their lives. For example, showing care and respect for each other, and forgiveness after wrongdoing. 'This is a happy, caring school', 'We are like a family', 'We are all treated with respect and we show respect'. These statements are frequently expressed by the adults and children of the school. Parents praise the school for its care and nurture in helping all children to flourish and grow, and the meaningful support given to any child and their family experiencing problems. Children are clear that this is a Church of England school and understand how this impacts on their learning for life although not all stakeholders can articulate the distinctively Christian basis of the school.

Children behave well both in their lessons and when outside at play. They are very keen to come to school and absence from school is minimal. Children are well motivated and engaged by all that the school offers both socially, academically and sports wise. They achieve well in many aspects including academically. Attainment in statutory testing is consistently above national outcomes. Academic progress in these tests is currently deemed broadly average although it can be seen that this is improving as a consequence of more accurate teacher assessment. The personal development and welfare of children is excellent and truly reflects the core Christian values in action. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well cared for with carefully crafted personalised plans in place to fully meet their needs. Relationships throughout the whole school community are especially good. It is a school where everyone works together for the best of every child. The highly inclusive nature of the school, firmly rooted in its Christian distinctiveness is a key strength of the school. Through its mission the school ensures that all of God's children are truly valued.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) opportunities are promoted through all aspects of the school life. This includes its curriculum, religious education (RE), collective worship, and enrichment experiences such as the many sporting activities available. It is strongly promoted through children's responsibilities such as Buddy Time, School Council and charity fund-raising. Children say that they welcome these opportunities to take on responsibility and it is clear that adults have noted a significant improvement in the attitude of the older children to the younger and more vulnerable. Parents also say that this improved regard for each other is further reflected out of school. This impact on the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness by ensuring children deepen their understanding of the needs of others both in school and in the wider world.

Religious education makes a good contribution to the school's Christian character and promotes the school's values through, for example, explicitly linking them to Bible stories taught in RE. Teaching and learning in the subject is good and children say that they enjoy their topics within the subject and are keen to display their knowledge and understanding. SMSC is also promoted in RE by, for example, raising children's awareness and understanding of different faiths. Children are able to talk about their awareness of other faiths but their understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith is, as yet, underdeveloped.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Recent changes to collective worship have enabled it to become more central and relevant to the daily life of the school. It is now more effective in promoting the school's Christian values. The headteacher, who is also the leader of collective worship, places a high priority on this aspect of the life of a Church of England School. Participants speak of its importance in bringing everyone together to worship God and as a way to demonstrate their care for each other as a whole school community within an atmosphere of trust and family unity. Collective worship has helped children to link clearly the Christian values to Christ's teaching and His life through the Bible stories that they hear during worship. Children recognise its importance and talk about what it means to them, for example, 'when I have problems I think of Job and realise that I can overcome them'. They are helped to apply what they are learning to their everyday lives.

Worship takes place in a variety of places and the incumbent supports worship in school on a weekly basis. Children benefit from visitors from other denominations and churches who also lead acts of worship. Opportunities to worship in the local churches are now limited due to logistical reasons. There are weekly class assemblies which lack focus as acts of worship because sometimes they are subsumed in other curriculum matters. As yet, leaders are not fully aware of the strengths and areas for improvement within collective worship because the systems of monitoring and evaluation lack rigour and depth. Further opportunities to know what needs to improve are lost

because children are not yet fully developed as leaders of worship and their opportunities to evaluate the daily cycle of collective worship are minimal.

There is an action plan in place to improve collective worship but this is in its infancy. Recently, the collective worship leader has accurately identified that there needs to be a sharp focus on enabling children to be more active participants in acts of worship. She has rightly identified the need to enrich the opportunities for worship rather than assembly and to create more opportunities for children to plan, lead and learn about worship.

Within worship, children regularly share Bible stories, songs and prayers. Although prayer is seen as important in the school, it is currently too restricted to set prayers with insufficient time devoted to children using their own prayers, whether spontaneous or pre prepared. As a consequence, children are not yet fully aware of the impact of prayer in their own lives although this aspect is developing.

Acts of worship are enabling children to develop an understanding of The Trinity and its centrality in Christian worship and their ability to articulate their understanding is age appropriate.

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

Many things have changed at the school since the previous inspection. It has become a stand-alone academy and there have been significant staff changes, including a new headteacher appointed from September 2015. This has enabled leaders to re-focus the vision for the school and ensure that the Christian Gospel is at its heart. Leaders know that they are on a journey and they understand the part they play in that journey.

The headteacher, who is dedicated, determined and highly thought of, has a clear Christian vision that solidly underpins the school's Christian distinctiveness which has developed significantly under her leadership. Her vision is shared by the school staff, the governing body, parents and children who all support her in promoting the school's values and developing a Christian, caring ethos which fully promotes kindness, dignity and respect. The impact shows in the growing way children understand and articulate the school's Christian values and apply them in their daily lives resulting in their positive achievements and well-being, excellent behaviour and relationships, and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents/carers/staff value the approachability of the headteacher. They say, 'we feel valued, our opinion is listened to, we are trusted, the headteacher always thinks of others', demonstrating the strength of pastoral support by the headteacher for families, children and staff. Adults attribute this to the Christian ethos and values of the school and the way in which they see the values being lived out in school. Inclusivity of all in the community is universally identified as a core strength of the school. This links strongly to the school's vision of 'being the best that we can be' and the importance placed on respect.

Since her appointment, the headteacher has implemented a system to monitor and evaluate the school as a church school resulting in positive developments in the school's Christian distinctiveness. However, these systems are not yet fully robust enough to precisely identify outcomes for improvement which can be then be swiftly acted upon thus enabling governors to hold leaders more fully to account for this aspect of the school's work.

Pupil voice opportunities are provided through the School Council. Already identified as an action for the near future is to extend the opportunities for pupil voice through establishing a Christian Council to enable children to be more fully involved in all aspects of developing collective worship, including being able to express their views about worship. The impact of pupil voice is further seen in the development of pupil voice feedback opportunities for example, worry boxes and the further development of reflection areas in classrooms.

The school is outward looking, working with a number of partners to help further raise standards. It is part of a cluster of local church schools known as The Grace Schools who support each other with peer review. This link enables strong collaboration and raises the profile of what it means to be a church school. The school is part of the Southwell Minster Teaching School Alliance and works with a number of other Headteachers to secure school improvement in informal partnerships. School Improvement is also monitored and challenged by the Diocesan School Improvement Partner who feeds back directly to the governing body. Links with the diocese are now strong, supporting whole school improvement and strengthening deeper Christian distinctiveness.

Leadership of RE is good. Although the leader has recently returned from leave, she has ensured that she has up to date knowledge of the changes to the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus due for implementation in September 2018. She has not yet undertaken a significant piece of training for her subject such as 'Understanding Christianity' but has plans for the future. There is an RE development plan in place which is part of the wider School Improvement Plan. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.