

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Threlkeld Church of England (VC) Primary School

Blease Road, Threlkeld, Keswick, CA12 4RX

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Carlisle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Cumbria

Date of inspection

23 March 2017

Date of last inspection

5 March 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 112276

Headteacher

Katharine Horder

Inspector's name and number

Sarah Oldroyd 870

School context

Threlkeld Church of England Primary School is a small rural school with 59 pupils. It is situated in a village near Keswick and within the Lake District National Park. The majority of pupils are from white British heritage. Pupils come from mixed socio economic backgrounds. Most are from the local and surrounding areas although a small number come from Keswick. The number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is in line with the national average. 10% of pupils are eligible for additional funding for pupils in receipt of free school meals.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Threlkeld Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

- Outstanding relationships between all members of the school community, underpinned by Christian values, are demonstrated by the way everyone cares for each other, with the result that all pupils thrive and make good personal progress.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour, together with excellent attitudes to learning, is underpinned by their understanding of the school's Christian values.
- Excellent links between the school, church and local community are mutually beneficial and contribute significantly to the school's Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Provide greater opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship to further develop their understanding of the purpose and structure of worship.
- Extend pupils knowledge of diverse cultures and faiths so that they more fully understand and respect diversity and difference.
- Provide a range of opportunities for pupils to read and write a wider variety of prayers to further develop their understanding of the purpose of prayer.

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

The Celtic cross on the entrance to the school emphasises the importance of the school's Christian foundation. The school's Christian values are clearly understood and articulated by all. As a result, the Christian character has a significant impact on the daily lives of all learners. Relationships between all members of the school community, based on Christian values, are outstanding. Parents describe the school as 'a warm, compassionate place' where pupils feel safe and secure. This nurturing, caring environment is evident in the way pupils encourage and look after each other. They say that 'Jesus told us to treat others as we want to be treated'. This could clearly be seen at lunchtime when the Friendship Squad organised games for the younger pupils, encouraging turn-taking and fair play. Exemplary behaviour and good attendance enable pupils to thrive and make good personal progress. The school's commitment to meeting the needs of all learners, including the most vulnerable, has led to attainment and progress which are slightly above national expectations. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good. Pupils clearly value the reflective spaces they have helped to create, using them to be quiet, say a prayer or reflect on a problem. They say this helps them to 'work things out'. Pupils are encouraged to think about how they can serve others 'as Jesus did'. They are proud of their support for several charities, particularly the Juniper Trust, a local charity supporting projects in Nepal. They enjoy their religious education (RE) lessons and are reflective, thoughtful learners. Pupils learn about other faiths, including Islam and Hinduism. They are encouraged to question and debate but also to respect the views of others. They say this helps them to be more tolerant of difference. However, the school does not have a planned programme of visits, visitors and global links to ensure the pupils have an understanding of difference and diversity in other faiths as well as Christianity. Parents value this small school, saying that 'it provides pupils with a strong moral compass'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship is clearly an important part of school life. Pupils value and enjoy collective worship as they say 'it brings us together as one big family'. The pupils listen well and respond appropriately, joining in enthusiastically with responses, prayers and hymns. Pupils particularly enjoy worship outside as it provides an opportunity to be 'thankful for God's world'. Worship is well planned. Themes link to Bible teaching and the school's Christian values. As a result, pupils have a developing understanding of Christian stories and say that these help them understand how to 'be a better person'. Worship, led by staff, members of the church community (following the retirement of the rector) and local visitors, provides a variety of experiences. These opportunities enrich the pupils' understanding of different Christian practices. Pupils occasionally have opportunities to plan and lead worship independently. They choose stories from the Bible, prayers and hymns to illustrate specific Christian values. Consequently they are able to explain links between the school's Christian values and Bible stories. Staff regularly evaluate worship which includes pupils' responses. Pupils have a limited understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils value the opportunities for prayer during the day. They are beginning to be aware of the purpose of prayer saying that it 'helps us to feel more at peace by talking to God'. They are familiar with traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer. However, there are currently few opportunities for pupils to write their own. Well established links with the church enrich worship. Services held in church, such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter, celebrate special events in the church and school year. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions. Services are well attended by parents and members of the local community who value the opportunity to share in worship. Governors monitor worship effectively and understand the impact it has on the school community. Feedback, such as not making worship too long, particularly for younger pupils, is used to inform future planning and leads to continuous improvement.

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

The head teacher provides very effective Christian leadership. All staff and governors share a clear vision for the school, which is strongly rooted in Christian values. The committed and supportive governors are regular visitors in school. As a result, they are clear that the school's Christian values can be seen in every part of school life. Since the inspection in 2012, governors have become more effective at monitoring the school as a church school. A recent questionnaire given to pupils provided governors with an insight into their understanding of the school's Christian values and the impact of worship. These were areas identified for improvement in the last inspection. This has contributed to self-evaluation and school development planning. As a result, staff have become more explicit in linking the school's Christian values to Bible teachings. This has strengthened pupils' understanding of the links between the two. Parents also contribute to self-evaluation and their comments show that they value the school as a church school. Governors realise the challenges facing small church schools and are proactive in looking at ways of securing the school's future. Pupils are proud of their contribution to school life. They know their ideas and suggestions are valued. There are strong links between the school, parents and church, with the school being at the heart of the community. These links, such as joint tree planting, are of mutual benefit as they contribute to the pupils' understanding of citizenship. Following the rector's recent retirement there has been a strong commitment by members of the local church to ensure that the links between the school and church are maintained. There are strong links with the local Methodist church which supports pupils' understanding of different Christian traditions. Pupils contributed to the Christmas Tree festival by writing prayers. RE and collective worship are well led and contribute effectively to the school's Christian distinctiveness. Training opportunities for staff and governors are used effectively in preparing future leaders of church schools.

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