

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Calthwaite Church of England Primary School

Calthwaite, Penrith, Cumbria. CA11 9QT

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Carlisle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Date of inspection

19 October 2017

Date of last inspection

07 November 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 112301

Headteacher

Joseph Askew

Inspector's name and number

Caronne Field 866

School context

Calthwaite Church of England Primary School is a very small rural school situated in the Eden district, north of Penrith. The 68 pupils are predominantly of White British heritage and from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The number of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well below average. The school supports a proportionally high percentage of pupils with additional needs. Many families travel from outside the catchment area to attend the school. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Since the last SIAS inspection there have been significant changes of staff and governance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Calthwaite as a Church of England school are good

- The highly dedicated and compassionate headteacher, supported by staff and governors, has established a thriving Christian learning community in which all children flourish.
- Children's understanding of Christian values influences their exemplary behaviour and attitudes to life.
- The inclusive learning environment provides excellent support for spiritual development. It challenges pupils to think deeply about Christian values and supports their understanding of prayer through a rich range of experiences.
- Purposeful links with the local church community enrich all aspects of learning and worship. This makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to the spiritual development of children.

Areas to improve

- Provide staff training and support for collective worship and religious education (RE). This is to ensure the school both maintains and builds upon current good practice.
- Establish partnerships with schools or communities both in the UK and in other areas of the world. This is to enhance children's knowledge of other world faiths and cultures.
- Ensure that collective worship and the curriculum provide more experience of Christian diversity. This is to enrich children's understanding of different cultures and different expressions of Christianity.

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

The inclusive and compassionate Christian ethos of the school family deeply influences all aspects of daily life. It is rooted in Christian values and a desire to nurture each child individually. Everyone is valued as a child of God and there is exceptional support for families. Parents are full of praise for the way in which the school 'champions' the most vulnerable pupils and never gives up on a child. Everyone's views are valued and this results in thoughtful and reflective learners who care for one another. Older pupils act as 'buddies' and provide much valued support and guidance for younger children in their worship, work and play. In this happy and secure learning environment, relationships are excellent and children make good progress from their starting points. Attendance is high because children enjoy coming to school.

Children readily articulate the importance of Christian values such as wisdom. They give examples of wisdom in Bible stories, such as in the story of Solomon, explaining that this helps us to make wise choices and shows us the way we need to behave towards others. Weekly 'memory verses' taken from the Bible reinforce children's understanding of these values as explicitly Christian. Parents attribute children's exemplary behaviour and relationships to the school's significant focus on Christian values.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is seamlessly woven through RE, collective worship and the wider curriculum. It enhances the school's distinctive Christian character. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their own values and explore questions of meaning. They explore the awesomeness of God's creation during forest school activities. Strong partnerships with the church and wider community enhance children's spiritual development. For instance, fun and creative after-school activities such as Puppet Club and Rainbow Group inspire children to discover more about God and Christian beliefs. Such activities have a profound impact on the spiritual development and well-being of children.

RE has a high profile and makes a good contribution to the Christian ethos of the school, supporting children's understanding of Biblical teachings which underpin Christian values. It provides opportunities through online projects like 'The Big Classroom' for children to respect diversity and difference. Children have a growing understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith and a sound knowledge of other world faiths, gained through lessons and visitors to the school. However, the school recognises that a wider range of experiences will help children to further enrich their understanding of diversity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is a vibrant and inclusive expression of the school family. Themes based on Christian values, festivals and Biblical teachings enable children to engage with a variety of worship experiences. Collective worship inspires reflection and raises aspirations. It draws on the experience of staff, clergy and other Christian groups with the result that pupils encounter different leadership styles. Children enjoy 'fun stuff' such as 'muppet style' puppet assemblies and contemporary worship music. They also value the 'Family Huddle' which enables the school community to come together to reflect and celebrate at the end of each week. Such activities underpin Christian values and enable children to understand how the teaching of Jesus can be a guide to daily life.

Children volunteer to lead weekly class worship. As a result, they have a developing understanding of the different elements of worship. Pupils explain that 'asking good questions' is an important feature of their worship. For example, one worship leader asked, 'How can we be wise when we face difficult problems?' They are encouraged to use their planning sheets to review each worship session. This means pupils are increasingly taking responsibility for decisions about how to make worship better. Consequently, worship is becoming a meaningful and an effective expression of their thoughts and feelings. This is successfully addressing an area for development from the last SIAS inspection. Staff, governors and pupils are engaged in the evaluation process with the result that worship continues to improve and evolve.

Prayer and reflection support children's spiritual development. Children understand the value of prayer because of the different experiences of prayer they encounter in worship and in the wider life of the school. Highly effective use is made of reflective areas and prayer spaces to support worship. Children especially value their new outdoor prayer space. They explain how each prayer station helps them to connect and speak with God. One pupil explained how the outdoor prayer space was 'a very special place' that he visited whenever he was feeling sad. He described how making a prayer with the words on wood helped him to feel better. Parents say that children talk about prayer at home. Worship and activities led by the vicar impact strongly on pupils' spiritual experience of worship. Children are actively involved in special church festivals, which are well

attended and valued by parents and community alike. Pupils have a sound understanding of the nature of God. For instance, one older pupil explained that the Holy Spirit is 'God's spirit coming down to earth and coming in us to guide us. It lets us enjoy the goodness of God.' However, children do not regularly experience worship material from the worldwide church and therefore do not have a clear understanding and appreciation of diverse Christian practice from around the world.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has a high profile within the curriculum. It is taught as a discrete subject, but strong links are made to collective worship, values education and the wider curriculum. The RE scheme of work is designed to help children understand Christian values. It also secures children's engagement with the beliefs, practices and value systems of other faiths. Themes taught through challenging questions encourage deeper thinking. Children enjoy the opportunities this gives for discussion and reflection, and for learning from religion as well as learning about it.

RE makes a positive contribution to SMSC development. For example, in an enquiry session, skilful questioning enabled older pupils to express their thoughts and beliefs on the practice of arranged marriage. Paired and group discussion allows all pupils to debate 'philosophical' questions. As a result, pupils understand that other people may have different viewpoints and ideas. They display a deep respect for difference and diversity. However, pupils have few opportunities to meet with or engage in dialogue with people of other faiths. Consequently, their knowledge and understanding draws upon their lessons rather than firsthand experience.

The curriculum secures coherent progress in skills and understanding as children move through the school. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points. Standards of attainment for the majority of learners are in line with national expectations and those achieved in other core subjects. A good response has been made to the focus from the last SIAS inspection with detailed systems for assessment and tracking procedures now in place. Marking is effective because it gives children a clear understanding of how to improve their work. Pupils are actively involved in assessing their own work or progress at the end of units of study. Governors work closely with the headteacher to monitor standards in this subject. They identify areas of strength and provide actions to ensure the continued development of RE.

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

The highly dedicated headteacher provides strong and compassionate Christian leadership. This is underpinned by a Christian vision that lies at the very heart of the school family. The vision for a school which enables 'each unique individual to flourish' and which nurtures 'healthy minds, healthy bodies and a healthy spirit' is rooted in the school's core Christian values. Parents understand this vision and describe the way in which the headteacher has made the school a 'very unique and special community'. They say how tirelessly both he and the staff team work to put the vision into practice. Staff live out the vision. This has resulted in a thriving Christian learning community. All groups praise the school's commitment to meeting the needs of each child, including the most vulnerable. It ensures the well being and achievement of all pupils.

Governors have a strong commitment to the school's Christian foundation. They have a clear understanding of development priorities because they carefully monitor, evaluate and review the school's work. School development planning prioritises church school issues. RE and collective worship are well led by the headteacher, with planning and evaluation contributing effectively to future church school development. The areas for development from the previous SIAS inspection have been addressed and their impact evaluated. Governors identify that the school currently relies on the headteacher to lead RE and the majority of worship. The headteacher will leave to take up a new post at the end of the year, and therefore, effective succession planning for RE and collective worship is a priority.

The school is highly regarded by the whole community. This is because there are very effective partnerships between the school, parents, church and the community it serves. Pupils take their responsibilities as school councillors seriously and are proud of their enterprise and service to others within the community. For instance, the school council works alongside other local schools to plan charitable fund-raising events. Parents appreciate the inclusiveness of the school and respect the way in which it enables all children to grow up feeling a valued part of the community. The words of a parent sum up the views of many, 'When we first visited this school we were blown away by it. Everyone was so welcoming, friendly and enthusiastic. We just felt at home.'