

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Bridekirk Dovenby Church of England School

Dovenby, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0PG

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Carlisle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Cumbria

Date of inspection

2 February 2017

Date of last inspection

3 November 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 112270

Headteacher

Julia Fish

Inspector's name and number

Caronne Field 866

School context

Bridekirk Dovenby is a small primary school of 137 pupils. It is situated in a rural position in North West Cumbria. Pupils are drawn from the surrounding villages and many pupils travel considerable distances to attend the school. The vast majority are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is low. The percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The headteacher has been in post since September 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bridekirk Dovenby as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Exemplary relationships reflect the Christian character of this inclusive school community and the Christian values it promotes. Everyone feels valued and all model the school ethos.
- The collaborative nature of leadership at all levels creates a shared sense of purpose, which supports the personal, spiritual and academic achievement of each child.
- High quality collective worship and religious education (RE) make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Highly effective links with the local church have a strong impact on the school's Christian character.

Areas to improve

- Further develop children's understanding of Christianity as a world faith, so that they gain a greater understanding of diversity and global issues.
- Develop partnerships in the local and wider community in order to share the school's outstanding practice.

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

The school's distinctive Christian character is firmly embedded in all aspects of school life. This is because strong mutually supportive relationships throughout the school are based on a shared understanding of Christian values. They underpin the school's vision 'Work together, aim high, shine bright' and ensure that the provision for the wellbeing and achievement of every child has a high priority throughout the school. Parents are full of praise for the dedication and expertise of the staff team. This is because they know, 'Children are loved and valued as individuals'. In this inclusive learning environment, behaviour is exemplary and attendance is high. Pupils play an important leadership role within the school community as both reception buddies and worship leaders. This means they develop an excellent understanding of Christian values and older children are able to explain Christian teachings about these values to younger children. For example, they describe the importance of forgiveness in their own relationships with reference to Peter asking Jesus a question on forgiveness. One pupil said, 'Jesus shows us how to live our own lives. It's important to take a moment for prayer and reflection. This makes you feel calm and helps you to forgive others.' Spirituality is highly developed because of the opportunities provided for reflection and prayer throughout the day. This has a profound impact on children's personal development. Reflection areas in each classroom and an 'awe and wonder' tree in the entrance hall support children in exploring deeper questions of meaning. Children enjoy RE because teachers promote critical thinking skills through an enquiry led approach that makes learning exciting, purposeful and relevant. It makes an important contribution to the school's Christian character and to spiritual development. Pupils understand the value of learning about other faiths and this has a positive impact on their attitudes to diverse religions and cultures. It is enhanced through visitors to the school and a well-planned programme of visits to different places of worship. Pupils are aware that Christianity is a global world faith, however, leaders recognise that this is an area for further development and have recently established links with faith schools in Kenya and France.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship lies at the very heart of the school. It influences the thinking and day to day actions of the whole school community. Pupils enjoy a rich variety of activities during worship time, including story, role-play, music and time to be still and reflect. They listen and respond thoughtfully, answer questions willingly, and participate enthusiastically in song, prayer and reflection. Pupils speak confidently about stories from the Bible, particularly those used by Jesus and are able to explain how the collective worship themes influence their own lives. Children's leadership of worship is outstanding. Pupils volunteer to lead weekly class worship and run their own collective worship committee. They plan together and increasingly take responsibility for decisions about how to make worship better through pupil surveys, interviews and displays. Their planning demonstrates an understanding of the distinct elements of worship. It results in worship that is meaningful and an effective expression of their thoughts and feelings. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of why Christians pray because they write and use their own prayers and they know the importance of reflection. Teachers speak with enthusiasm about class worship. This gives them the opportunity to develop Christian values and themes at a level appropriate for the age of their class. Highly effective use is made of reflective areas in each classroom to support worship. Pupils explain that they can use this area at any time 'to share worries and to say sorry, or thank you to God'. Older pupils are able to talk about the Trinity and describe how, 'The Holy Spirit guides you and is always there inside you.' They explain the spiritual joy or sadness that they sometimes feel as a 'goose bump' moment. Well-established links with the local church provide strong pastoral support and enrich worship. Services held in church and events such as Experience Pentecost, along with the well-attended Explorer's after-school club, support children's spiritual development and well-being. Parents and friends from the community value the opportunity to share in children's work and worship. The views of children and adults are considered as part of the highly effective on-going evaluation process.

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

Strong Christian leadership from the headteacher places 'Christ's teaching at the heart of the school community.' All members of the school family experience and live out this vision. Staff describe the school as a very happy place to work and learn. Governors carry out their roles well and demonstrate high levels of commitment to the school. They have a clear understanding of development priorities because they effectively monitor, evaluate and review the school's work. Regular meetings between the headteacher, RE leaders and a foundation governor ensure that RE and collective worship has a high priority within school. Their leadership is inspirational and the quality of provision for RE and collective worship is excellent. Training linked to church school development is preparing future leaders of church schools. As a result, there is a high level of shared expertise across the team. The school is outward facing and involved in a range of initiatives within the diocese, such as writing some of the new diocesan units of work. It has not only sustained, but also developed as an outstanding school since the last inspection. Areas for development from the last SIAMS report have been fully addressed and a renewed focus has been given to spiritual

development. Leaders now need to consider ways to share their exemplary practice with others. The school has an on-going commitment to Christian service. Pupils plan charitable fundraising projects including Macmillan Cancer Support and Children in Need events. They understand that this makes a difference to the lives of others. Strong and mutually supportive relationships with the local church and community ensure everyone works with common purpose to achieve the very best for children and their families. The words of a parent sum up the views of many, 'Our school is like a family. It's the friendliest place we have ever been in and feels completely connected to the church and community.'

SIAMS report February 2017 Bridekirk Dovenby Church of England School, Dovenby, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0PG