

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ivegill C of E School

Ivegill, Carlisle, Cumbria. CA4 0PA

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Carlisle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Cumbria

Date/s of inspection

27 April 2017

Date of last inspection

13 July 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

112303 Voluntary Aided

Headteacher

Sue Stainton

Inspector's name and number

Jo Williams 863

School context

Ivegill Cof E Primary School is a smaller than average sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Whilst the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is higher. Since the last inspection the school has become a joint gateway school for the Rural Learning Alliance Teaching School. The headteacher has undertaken several executive headship roles in recent years and there have also been several changes to the teaching staff. The number on role has increased by 20% in the last five years.

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

- The school's highly effective leadership ensures that the deeply embedded Christian character permeates all aspects of school life. This has a positive impact on academic standards and pupil wellbeing.
- The school's Christian vision drives its inclusive approach resulting in all pupils feeling valued for who they are, regardless of background or ability.
- Well developed and meaningful relationships, rooted in the school's Christian values, give pupils a sense of belonging in a sincere, caring environment.
- Pupils employ a wide range of refined investigative skills in religious education, thus gaining a greater depth of understanding in the subject.

Areas to improve

- Provide pupils with an even broader experience of worship by expanding the team of adult worship leaders and including pupils where appropriate.
- Deepen pupils' spiritual development through extending reflection and prayer spaces to the outdoors.

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

The school's strong Christian character focuses on each child as an individual. A governor described the school's Christian approach as a 'desire to develop each child as an individual, focus on the child rather than one size fits all'. Alongside this approach the Christian strapline of '#etc' (endurance, trust, community) permeates all aspects of school life. This results in high levels of pupil wellbeing alongside very good academic standards regardless of a pupil's background or ability. The school radiates its Christian character so much so that parents struggled to give specific examples. They explained that 'it is just there!' and that 'Christian values are underlying all the way through'. This was reiterated in an example at a playtime following a lesson on the Fruit of the Spirit. Pupils asked to stay in to write paragraphs about how their teachers demonstrated these same spiritual fruits. The headteacher stated that 'God isn't a box - it makes us free to think, free to be'. This Christian ethos, modelled by staff, in turn promotes pupils' well developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth. Extremely effective relationships are a strength across the school. A governor explained that, 'the way staff approach working with families is based on Christian values'. Likewise, parents feel confident leaving their children at the school each day knowing they will be well cared for, describing the staff as showing empathy and kindness. The school recognises the challenges of being located in a small rural community and therefore is highly proactive in ensuring pupils develop an understanding of diversity. Pupils value their learning about other faiths and visits to different places of worship. One pupil commented that it helped them 'understand how other people think about God because everybody's different'. As a result pupils have an extremely respectful understanding of difference and diversity. Religious education (RE) plays a significant role in supporting the Christian character of the school. For example, whole school activities, such as global Easter traditions, ensure that pupils have a firm understanding of Christianity as a multicultural worldwide faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

All members of the school community enjoy collective worship because of its relevance to their lives. Recent news events, as well as needs from within the community, are shared in worship. For example, the footballer Ugo Ehiogu's tweet, the day before his death, was linked to the school's Christian values to encourage random acts of kindness. The vicar described the impact of worship on pupils' daily lives by saying that it 'undergirds everything, the way of thinking about life'. As a result, pupils remember and continue to act upon key messages from acts of worship that had taken place some time ago. For example, pupils still recall the challenge to walk in another person's shoes, that had been shared with them as they started the new school year. Months later, they continue to recognise its ongoing importance. Collective worship is distinctively Christian and bible stories are used to reinforce the school's three core Christian values, #etc. Staff gave examples of how worship plays a key role in developing pupils' spirituality through the use of prayer and reflection. A younger pupil used the class's reflective area to thank God for a weekend walk with daddy. Pupils value prayer saying that you can ask God for help if you're stuck but also that it 'takes away your worries knowing somebody (God) is with you'. However, whilst Christian reflection areas are well used around the school building, as yet there are fewer quiet spaces for pupils to access outdoors. Worship is highly effective in providing pupils with a good understanding of the Holy Trinity. The vicar used worship to describe the Holy Trinity as 'God the creator, Jesus the redeemer and Holy Spirit the motivator'. One pupil even went as far as to explain the meaning of the word incarnation with reference to Jesus' role in the Holy Trinity. Worship is well planned and changes have taken place as a result of regular feedback from pupils and staff. Pupils have a significant input to the weekly class worship, even planning it in each others' houses after school. Although the excellent quality of shared times deepens pupils' spirituality, it currently overly relies on the headteacher to lead the majority of the acts of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) is greatly valued as a core subject in the school's curriculum. As a result, standards in RE are consistently high and compare favourably with other areas of the curriculum. Pupils thoroughly enjoy RE and said that they are encouraged to work hard because the subject 'feels more free, there are no set answers'. The teaching of RE is particularly imaginative and requires pupils to employ a wide variety of skills that ensure a greater understanding of the deeper meaning of theological topics. Lessons are highly interactive and engaging. Pupils' understanding flourishes through thoughtful discussions and meaningful experiences such as a visit from a Syrian refugee. Pupils are challenged to apply RE themes to their own daily lives. Parents gave examples of lessons learnt in RE being lived out at home. For instance, a child spontaneously making poppies to give away and another playing with hamma beads to explain the Holy Trinity to mum. In a lesson about the Bible pupils demonstrated a broad knowledge as well as honed enquiry skills. For example, in response to why there is a Bible in every hotel room, pupils demonstrated a wider perspective by asking but why not a Qu'ran? Likewise they thought that the Bible had probably been translated in different languages because there were Christians in many different places. RE focuses predominantly on Christianity and is especially effective in supporting pupils' deepening understanding of the faith

and their engagement with it. For instance, one child was keen to recount a lesson describing what Jesus looks like in abstract form. He had visualised a locked wardrobe with Jesus being the key to heaven beyond. There is a meticulous approach to the assessment of RE. Staff apply the same tracking system used in other subjects, ensuring a clear focus on pupil progression through key skills. Teacher marking and judgements are moderated to ensure consistency. There is strong leadership of RE. The subject leader manages the subject with rigour, providing effective support whilst maintaining meaningful links with foundation governors. As a result there have been significant developments in RE since the last inspection. This is demonstrated in the seamless introduction of both new curriculum content and innovative approaches. Therefore pupils have been able to extend their enquiry skills and the quality of reflection time saying, 'we are given time and place to think about everything'.

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

The school's Christian vision is woven through all aspects of school life. Governors described reading the Church of England's latest vision document as a 'eureka moment' saying 'this is what we do, encouragement of children in all aspects, it hits home – nails it for us'. As a result, the Christian vision clearly impacts on the high academic standards as well as pupil wellbeing. The vicar explained that the 'children are encouraged to look at everything through the lens of Christian values'. Views from the wider school community are actively sought by leadership to ensure that improvement priorities are relevant. Parents illustrated their sense of belonging and inclusion through their description of church and school as 'a community rolled into one'. Staff and governors know their school exceptionally well and this results in highly effective strategic planning for sustained school development. One governor described a holistic approach where development priorities are rooted in Christian values rather than being solely data driven. These values of '#etc' are clearly promoted and modelled by the school's leadership. Parents spoke of a trust their children felt in knowing that they are individually valued. RE is very well led, resourced and managed and collective worship is inspiring. As a result both have a high profile in the school and meet statutory requirements. As a gateway school for the local teaching school alliance, staff are well placed to access training to support them in career progression. Several teachers have completed supplementary national professional qualifications. Effective modelling of Christian leadership and in-house mentoring have provided staff with real insight regarding the distinctively Christian character of church schools. The school has a thriving range of sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships. The local Mothers' Union is dedicated in its work with the school. For example, they are committed to running an enjoyable monthly Christian Saturday club for the pupils. Likewise, members also come into school to help whenever needed, for example, making Christingles. Another example of a truly effective partnership is the shared commitment between the local cathedral and the school. Both benefit from collective activities including a pupil choir run by the cathedral's organist. The headteacher likened the impact of the school's innate Christian vision to breathing. She explained the illustration as breathe in and reflect and breathe out and act.

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