

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Bridget's Church of England Primary School

Brigham, Cockermouth. CA13 0TU

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Carlisle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Satisfactory

Local authority

Cumbria

Date of inspection

07 June 2017

Date of last inspection

21 May 2014

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 112271

Headteacher

Lisa Hemingway

Inspector's name and number

Caronne Field 866

School context

St Bridget's Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average sized primary school. It serves the rural village of Brigham near Cockermouth in Cumbria. The 123 pupils are predominantly of White British heritage and from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Whilst the majority of pupils live within the catchment area some pupils travel from further afield to attend the school. The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average (5%). The percentage with special educational needs and disabilities is in line with the national average (12%). Staffing and leadership have been stable for some time. The school received the Bishop's Church and School Award in 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bridget's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian vision and commitment of the headteacher, strongly supported by staff, governors and parents, inspires and drives all aspects of school improvement. It significantly impacts upon the lives and achievements of all pupils.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to life and learning are firmly rooted in their understanding of Christian values.
- Spiritual development is excellent because of the opportunities provided for reflection, not only during collective worship but also across the curriculum. This has a profound effect upon children's thinking and relationships.
- Strong and mutually enriching links between the school and church community make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to children's spiritual growth.

Areas to improve

- Extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures and faiths through a programme of visits and visitors so that their respect for people of different faiths and cultures is informed by an even greater understanding of diversity.
- Extend provision for pupils' spiritual growth through the development of outdoor spaces so that children experience stillness, reflection and prayer in different settings.

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

Deeply embedded Christian values strongly influence every aspect of school life. They lie at the heart of all relationships and guide decision making. As a result, all children feel loved and valued. Children understand that Christian values are rooted in Biblical teaching. They readily link the Christian value of humility to the story of Jesus as Servant King washing the disciples' feet. Older pupils explain how they try to demonstrate their love and service to others through their responsibilities within the school community and support for charities. Parents value the highly nurturing and inclusive family environment. They firmly attribute this to the Christian character of the school. In this happy and secure learning environment, relationships are excellent and children make good progress from their starting points. Attainment over time is in line with or above national expectations.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is outstanding and enriched by the school's Christian character. The wider curriculum supports children to explore deeper questions of meaning. Themes such as 'What the Bible means to us' and 'Where is God?' inspire all members of the school community to reflect on their lives and to think deeply about the significance of the school's Christian values. This has a profound impact on the spiritual development and well-being of children and adults alike. Church and school work closely together to provide a wide range of creative experiences. Extra-curricular clubs such as The Ark and Noah's Circle are Christian clubs led by an inspirational ecumenical team of church volunteers and workers. They deliver a range of exciting activities that challenge and engage children of all ages. In recognition of this exemplary work, the school received the Bishop's Church and School Award.

Children enjoy religious education (RE) because teachers promote critical thinking skills and provide opportunities for pupils to respond creatively to learning about religion. Since the previous SIAMS inspection, the school have worked hard to ensure children are aware that Christianity is a worldwide church. Pupils say that visits, for example to the Bassenfell Christian Centre, visitors to the school and global themed weeks, help them to appreciate different Christian traditions. They understand the value of learning about other faiths, cultures and beliefs and this has a positive impact on their attitudes to diversity and difference. One pupil explained, 'It's important for us to learn about other religions because it helps us to be tolerant and understanding. This is important for the future. We all need to be able to get along together.' However, the school recognises the need to provide opportunities for pupils to engage with people of other faiths through additional experiences, for example, visits to a range of places of worship. This is to help pupils to develop a greater knowledge and understanding of different faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is inclusive and inspirational. It makes a profound impact on children's thinking and relationships. Detailed planning ensures that through worship children reflect on a range of Christian values, Bible stories and festivals. Parents receive helpful information about each theme on the school website. This means families are able to share and talk about Bible stories and values at home. Consequently, children gain a deeper understanding of the relevance of Christian values and teachings to their daily lives. Leadership of worship draws on staff and visitors from the local church and other faith communities, such as the Methodist minister. As a result, children encounter a rich range of worship styles. Pupils are enthusiastic about worship because they participate fully and take responsibility for leadership regularly. Younger children use puppets, songs and rhymes to help them recognise the different parts of worship. They help to set up the worship table and lead responses. Consequently, even the very youngest children develop an understanding of the nature and purpose of worship. Older pupils plan and lead worship independently. They say how much they enjoy this responsibility and try to make it interesting by including questions, drama, music and Bible stories. Links with RE and other areas of the curriculum contribute to children's understanding of worship themes, for example, older pupils created storyboards and videos of the Easter story for a worship presentation.

Prayer and reflection are intrinsic to school life. Prayer spaces and imaginative resources around the school encourage reflection and provide support for children to write their own prayers. This deepens pupils' understanding of prayer. Although plans are in place to develop a spiritual garden in the school grounds there are currently fewer opportunities for children to experience prayer and reflection in the outdoors. This is something that the school are keen to develop. Children are developing an understanding of Christian symbolism and the nature of God, for instance, pupils introduce worship by placing a Bible, a cross and a candle on the worship table to represent the Trinity. An older pupil explained, 'This reminds us that we see God through His Creation, we believe in God through the life and teachings of Jesus and we feel God inside us through the Holy Spirit.'

The mutually supportive partnership with the local parish and Methodist churches significantly enriches worship experiences. Special events such as Experience Easter and Experience Pentecost effectively contribute to children's understanding of Christian beliefs about each festival. Pupils confidently lead Christian festivals in church. This results in worship that is memorable and an effective expression of children's thoughts and feelings. Children enjoy sharing these experiences with friends and family.

Evidence portfolios clearly demonstrate the many ways in which worship supports children's spiritual journeys. At

the end of each theme, pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their learning about a core value. This enables children to think about their experiences, challenges them to ask searching questions and consider opportunities for response. Evaluation of collective worship takes many forms because it involves all members of the school community. Learning walks, photographs and annotated examples of pupils' work effectively support formal and informal feedback and comments. This enables leaders to understand the impact of worship on children's thinking, attitudes and ideas. It successfully informs next steps and future planning.

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

Determined and compassionate Christian leadership from the headteacher has been a driving and inspirational force for school improvement. She has worked tirelessly with governors, staff, clergy and parents to shape the distinctive Christian vision that lies at the very heart of school life. Consequently, Christian teachings guide and sustain the school community in all aspects of its daily life. All agree that the vibrant environment, warmth of welcome, and the care and concern for every child springs from the school's Christian ethos and values. Evidence portfolios record a transformational journey for the whole school community. This has resulted in significant improvements to the Christian character of the school since the previous inspection. Christian values inform policy making and strategic planning. They underpin the exemplary behaviour of pupils, their achievement and their relationships. Governors have a clear understanding of development priorities because they rigorously monitor, evaluate and review the school's work. The areas for development from the previous SIAMS inspection have been fully addressed and their impact evaluated. The highly effective self-evaluation process engages all stakeholders. Regular monitoring visits, work scrutiny, and meetings between the headteacher and the governors' church ethos committee lead to sustained improvement and effective practice. Leaders ensure RE and collective worship are well led, hold a central place in the curriculum and fulfil statutory requirements. High standards of teaching and learning in RE result in excellent outcomes.

Professional development has a high priority and whole-school teamwork and collaboration is excellent. Strong partnerships and training with local church schools provide opportunities for staff and governors to share and observe outstanding practice. Diocesan support and training contribute to the development of teaching and governance very well. Recent training on the Understanding Christianity project has further enhanced staff knowledge and understanding of key Christian concepts. The headteacher mentors aspirant headteachers with the result that they gain valuable experience of leadership in a church school.

Pupils' involvement as leaders in the school's decision-making process is outstanding. Children take their responsibilities on the school council and on the recently formed children's ethos group seriously. They know that their actions make a difference to the lives of others in the school, church and wider community. This includes charitable and community work, for instance, children organised a sponsored walk up a local fell for Children in Need.

School, families and local church communities work with common purpose and with close cooperation to achieve the very best for each child. This enriches the life of the whole community.

SIAMS report June 2017 St Bridget's Church of England Primary School, Brigham, Cockermouth. CA13 0TU