

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St James' Church of England Junior School

Blake Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 1NY

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Carlisle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Cumbria

Date of inspection

29 June 2017

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 112362

Headteacher

Angela Rawlinson

Inspector's name and number

Sarah Oldroyd 870

School context

St James' C of E Junior school serves the Hindpool area of Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria. The area experiences significant socio economic deprivation. There are 142 pupils on roll, the majority of which are White British. 12% of pupils have special educational needs and disabilities, which is in line with the national average. The number of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is considerably higher than usual (51%). The school moved into a new, purpose built school in February 2015. There have been significant on-going problems with the new building, which have been well managed by the headteacher and leadership team to ensure minimal disruption to pupils.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James' Junior School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- Christian values underpin all aspects of school life, providing a strong, nurturing environment which supports both pupils and parents.
- Inspirational leadership from the headteacher, well supported by all staff and governors, which focuses on achieving the very best outcomes for all pupils.
- Inspirational collective worship makes a major contribution to pupils' spirituality.
- High quality religious education (RE) is intrinsically linked with the school's Christian values. It has a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all learners.

Areas to improve

- Involve pupils in the evaluation of collective worship so that their views inform planning and support the development of worship.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to experience reflection outside so that they have a special place to be still, quiet or prayerful

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

Distinctively Christian values are evident in all aspects of school life. They are clearly articulated and shared by all members of the school community. The caring, Christian ethos, which promotes respect for all, provides an environment in which everyone can flourish. Pupils are proud of their school and see it as a very special place. They feel safe and appreciate the stability and security the school provides. Relationships between all members of

the school community are outstanding, demonstrating the school's motto of 'Care, Share and Respect'.

Staff know all the pupils very well. This contributes to pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. The calm, purposeful working environment enables all pupils to learn effectively. They are very knowledgeable about Bible stories and are able to make links between stories and the school's Christian values. Pupils' support and care for each other can be seen in their interaction on the playground. It can also be seen in the recent support given to a Year 6 pupil who has been seriously ill. One pupil said that Bible stories teach about caring and sharing. He said that 'Jesus had those values inside himself and he taught us to care for others whoever they are.' Pupils are able to use Bible stories, such as The Good Samaritan, to illustrate their thinking. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy their learning. The school's commitment to meeting the needs of all learners, including the most vulnerable, has led to attainment which is in line with national expectations.

Spirituality is highly developed because of the opportunities for reflection during the day. Pupils say that their lessons teach them the importance of being still, quiet and reflective. They make good use of the quiet room where they can be still, quiet and prayerful, but as yet have no outdoor quiet place. The development of SMSC is enhanced through visits to the local Buddhist temple and to the recent Bible exhibition at Risedale Gospel Hall. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities such as art and drama clubs and choir. These contribute significantly to their social and personal development. Pupils enjoy RE and speak about the subject with enthusiasm. Good use is made of visitors and visits to support pupils' understanding of diversity. For example, a recent visit by a practising Muslim enabled them to learn about his faith and to ask questions to extend their understanding. Pupils learn about a number of other religions including Judaism. They are clear that it is important to understand similarities and differences 'so that we can empathise with other faiths'.

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and has significant impact on pupils' personal development. Worship is well planned with themes linked to the school's Christian values and Bible teachings. It informs pupils' behaviour choices and helps them reflect on issues such as how to resolve disputes. Pupils and staff see it as an important time for the whole school to come together as one big family. Pupils enjoy worship. They say that it 'helps us to learn about God'. It also helps them to understand the teachings of Jesus and reminds them how they should live. Reflection is central to worship and encourages a high level of spirituality.

Leadership of worship is shared between all staff. Support from the local clergy is outstanding. Clergy are regular visitors to school, leading worship and talking with pupils and staff. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to act out Bible stories. They regularly plan and lead worship. Consequently, they have a good understanding of Christian teachings and are confident in choosing stories which link to the school's values. They are able to explain how Christian teachings impact on their everyday lives.

Worship starts with a greeting which supports pupils understanding of the Trinity. As a result they are able to articulate their thoughts very well. One pupil said the 'Trinity is like a triangle with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit at each corner, showing there was no beginning or end and that they are all one'. Prayer is given a high profile in school. Pupils know traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer. Following a recent Prayer Day, pupils talk confidently about their understanding of the purpose of prayer. They say that praying is a chance to 'talk to God and ask for forgiveness' and that it 'can give you comfort when life is difficult'. Children wrote a variety of prayers, during the day, which resulted in the school's prayer book and were also hung on the prayer tree in the hall. These are well used throughout the day, particularly during worship. The termly Eucharist, at which pupils and staff who are confirmed take part, helps to support their spirituality and understanding of Christian traditions. The neighbouring church is well used. Pupils lead services at Mothering Sunday, Harvest, Christmas and Easter. They are able to speak confidently about the different festivals in the church year. Special services such as Candlemass are well attended by parents and members of the community. Effective links with other faith communities such as the Quakers at Swarthmoor Hall enables pupils to develop their understanding of Christian worship. The headteacher and worship coordinator evaluate worship which feeds into improvement. However, there is no system in place for pupils to contribute to evaluation.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

RE is greatly valued as a core subject within the school's curriculum. The subject is well planned using a variety of resources including the diocesan scheme of work. Teaching is creative and requires pupils to apply a range of skills to deepen their learning. Pupils enjoy the subject as they say that they like being able to discuss, debate and question. Lessons make use of a range of activities including drama, art and design technology. Personal opinions are valued and there is an emphasis on developing reasoning skills.

Through discussion and debate, pupils are able to develop a greater understanding of Christian teachings. In one lesson, Year 4 pupils studying Shabbat were asked to consider how it was similar to Christian celebrations. Pupils

were able to make links with the symbolism of the bread and wine in a Christian Eucharist. In a Year 5 confirmation class, led by the vicar, pupils considered questions such as 'is there a God' and 'what is faith'? Pupils were able to conclude that faith is a belief in something which can't necessarily be seen but in which you have complete trust. RE is extremely well led with a continuous focus on improvement. Monitoring shows all teaching is at least good and much is outstanding. Given their starting points, pupils make very good progress. Standards in RE meet national expectations and are in line with other areas of the curriculum. Pupils say their teachers make RE fun and help them to understand concepts. Assessment of the subject is thorough. Marking shows next steps for improvement and provides challenge as well as points for reflection. The coordinator has collated a portfolio of moderated work showing the high standards of work in RE. This is used to ensure consistency in assessment. Planning develops pupils' cultural understanding, ensuring that RE topics provide opportunities to explore other faiths.

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

Leadership is inspirational. The headteacher is passionate about providing the very best education for the pupils in her care. She lives the school's Christian vision, leading by example. Christian teachings are at the heart of all aspects of school life and the basis for all decision making. As a result, the school is a caring, happy place where everyone feels valued. The headteacher is well supported by the leadership team, staff and governors. Working together, they ensure that the school community is firmly supported by 'a strong Christian ethos'.

Links between the church and school are very strong and mutually beneficial. Governors are regular visitors to school, supporting learning and helping with after school clubs. As a result they have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school. They are supportive as well as questioning. They are clear about the challenges facing schools and are effective in planning for school development. All members of the school community are involved in self-evaluation. The school works hard to engage with parents who know they can talk to staff about issues or problems.

The pupil voice, through the school council, is strong. Pupils know that their views are valued and are proud of their contribution to the decision-making process. They raise money for charities such as Children in Need, the local homeless shelter and also to support their sponsored child in Uganda.

Partnerships between school and community are well established. For example, pupils were involved in a local regeneration project and the choir frequently performs in church and at local musical events. The local police constable visits school weekly, helping to resolve issues affecting pupils outside school. This ensures issues are not brought into school. These links help pupils to develop a sense of citizenship within the community. RE and collective worship are very well led, resourced and managed. The school has developed partnerships with local church schools to observe and share outstanding practice. The development of the leadership team has allowed for succession planning and enables staff to develop as future leaders of church schools.

SIAMS report June 2017 St James Church of England Junior School, Barrow-in-Furness. LA14 I NY