

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Waberthwaite Church of England Primary School

Waberthwaite, Cumbria. LA19 5YJ

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Carlisle**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Date of inspection

25 January 2018

Date of last inspection

22 February 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 112352

Headteacher

Sandra Cummings

Inspector's name and number

Caronne Field 866

#### School context

Waberthwaite Church of England Primary School is a very small rural school situated on the west coast of Cumbria. The 55 pupils, along with 14 children in nursery provision are predominantly of White British heritage and from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. They are taught in three mixed-age classes. 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 special educational needs (28%). Prior to the appointment of the new headteacher in April 2016, the school experienced a prolonged period of instability.

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

- The new headteacher, effectively supported by staff and governors, has strengthened and developed the school's distinctive Christian character, with the result that this is a happy, inclusive and thriving school community.
- Children's exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are closely linked to their understanding of the Christian values of endurance, friendship, compassion and kindness.
- An imaginative use of the school grounds enriches the curriculum and contributes to children's spiritual development and wellbeing.
- Purposeful links with the local church enhance all aspects of learning and worship. This makes an important contribution to the school's Christian character and to the spiritual development of children.

#### Areas to improve

- Involve the whole school family in the regular cycle of self-evaluation so that all views can influence and support the development of the school's Christian character.
- Extend opportunities for children to plan and lead worship in order to develop their understanding of Christian beliefs.
- 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 good at meeting the needs of all learners**

Deeply respectful and caring relationships reflect the Christian character of this inclusive school community. Parents describe a 'warm and welcoming atmosphere' which promotes a strong sense of belonging. Working together, staff, governors and children have established a distinctive Christian vision and a core set of Christian values. This has inspired the school community and brought a new sense of purpose and trust. Christian values now underpin everything that the school does and guide all decision-making.

Children develop a practical understanding of each Christian value and an appreciation of its impact on their daily lives. They readily link the Christian value of compassion to stories such as the Good Samaritan and the Paralysed Man. Monthly 'Bible Challenge' reinforces children's understanding of these values as explicitly Christian. Parents attribute children's exemplary behaviour and relationships to the school's focus on Christian values. In this happy and secure learning community, children make good progress from their starting points. Attainment over time is in line with national expectations.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) contribute well to the Christian character of the school. Children of all ages are encouraged to raise and reflect upon 'I wonder' questions in RE, collective worship and the wider curriculum. The school's inspirational garden enables all pupils to grow and harvest their own produce. Children respond imaginatively to the gift of God's creation and our responsibility to care for the world. For instance, after the harvest festival in church, children were inspired to make a donation to help farmers elsewhere in the world to feed and support their family.

Religious education (RE) makes an effective contribution to the Christian ethos of the school. Visits to other places of worship, for example, a Buddhist temple, York Minster and Carlisle Cathedral motivate children to want to learn more about different faith traditions and cultures. This has a positive impact on their attitudes to diversity and difference. However, wider experiences of Christian diversity are not sufficiently developed to ensure that children have a secure understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective Worship is an integral part of each day for the school family. It underpins the school's core Christian values and supports the inclusive ethos of the school. Leadership of worship draws on the experience of the headteacher, staff and vicar with the result that children experience a range of leadership styles. Planning ensures that themes are rooted in Christian teaching and everyday life.

Children are actively involved in worship through drama, re-telling of Bible stories and music. They speak with pride about being nominated for showing kindness and compassion for others in the weekly 'Good to be Green' celebration assembly. They link this to the school's core Christian values, explaining that Jesus gives us an example of how we should live our daily lives. Whilst pupils regularly participate at these times, the school recognises the need to increase their involvement in planning and leading worship.

Worship also provides the opportunity for quiet reflection and prayer. Children know formal prayers but also write their own prayers. They clearly articulate their understanding of the value of personal prayer, explaining, 'It is important to listen as well as to talk to God.' 'I wonder' displays and reflection areas around the school encourage children to explore and respond to questions of meaning and purpose.

Worship and activities led by the vicar impact strongly on pupils' spiritual experience of worship. Pupils describe how the vicar makes these times special and meaningful. They regularly participate in church festivals, such as the Easter Story and Harvest service. Year 6 children also attend the leavers service at Carlisle Cathedral. Children enjoy sharing and celebrating these experiences with families and friends. Pupils develop a familiarity with many Anglican traditions and prayers. They have a good knowledge of the life and person of Jesus and a developing understanding of the nature of God.

The views of children and adults contribute to the on-going evaluation process. This supports future planning and improves practice.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Children demonstrate a high level of engagement in RE. Creative learning experiences encourage children to think, question, interpret and analyse different practices. The RE curriculum is thoughtfully designed to ensure children understand Christian values and engage with the beliefs, practices and value systems of other faiths. Careful planning for the mixed-age classes ensures learning is a progressive and coherent journey. In a lower Key Stage 2 class, pupils explored a picture of The Prodigal Son by Rembrandt. They responded thoughtfully to the question 'Who shows greater endurance?' by reflecting upon the patient love that the father showed his son. Personal responses placed in 'meaning boxes' reflect pupils' understanding. For example, one pupil wrote, 'The father in the story represents God, the son represents God's children... us.' Children also speak enthusiastically about Bible Challenge activities led by the class teacher and supported by the vicar. As a result, children gain a secure knowledge and understanding of Christian values and Bible teaching. This fully addresses an area for development from the previous SIAS inspection. Children also recognise similarities and differences between the Christian faith and other religions. Pupils say that their lessons and visits to other places of worship, such as the Buddhist temple, help them to respect and understand different religious beliefs. Consequently, RE effectively engages children in learning about and learning from religion.

The school has recently implemented new systems for assessment and the tracking of children's progress. An interactive portfolio of work provides developing evidence of pupils' skills and personal responses. Evidence from assessment indicates children make good progress given their starting points. Standards of attainment for the majority of learners are in line with national expectations and those achieved in other core subjects. Marking and feedback is effective because it helps children to understand their next steps in learning. Pupils respond thoughtfully and are able to suggest ways in which they could improve. This responds to an area for development in the previous SIAS inspection.

Leadership of RE is effective. The headteacher has brought about improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in RE through staff training and support. The subject is effectively monitored and evaluated by the staff and governors. This contributes to the development of the subject and informs future priorities.

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

Purposeful Christian leadership from the headteacher and governors has inspired and united the whole school community. A renewed Christian vision now lies at the heart of the school. It is central in promoting the wellbeing and achievement of all members of the school family. Staff live out the vision, modelling relationships which reflect Christian values. Parents speak with understanding about the importance of the school's core Christian values. All appreciate the inclusive school ethos that enables each child to grow up feeling a valued part of the community.

Governance is effective. The chair of governors provides excellent skills and support for the governor team. This has been instrumental in helping the school to move forward as a church school. Governors have implemented effective monitoring and evaluation systems to secure improvement. Parents are engaged and supportive, but they are not regularly involved in the church school self-evaluation process. RE and collective worship have a positive impact upon the school and meet statutory requirements. The effective response to the last SIAS inspection has helped the school to move forward. Diocesan training and advice has supported teaching, learning and governance. The school has prioritised training for RE. This has resulted in staff attending training for new approaches to Christianity. A close partnership with local schools enables staff and governors to develop many aspects of their practice as a church school.

The work of the school is enriched by its strong links with the local community. Children enjoy being part of a vibrant tapestry of church and community events. The church provides excellent spiritual support through activities such as the popular after-school Christian club. Classes regularly attend and exhibit their work at local shows. They are extremely proud of the many awards they receive for their school garden. Pupils take their responsibilities as school councillors 'voices' seriously through their enterprise and service to others. Families and friends feel very welcome in the school. As one parent reflected, 'We may be a small school, but we all feel part of a big family.'