

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Calder Vale St. John's Church of England Primary School	Calder Vale Garstang Preston Lancashire PR3 1SR
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Lancashire
Date/s of inspection	22 September 2016
Date of last inspection	25 January 2012
School's unique reference number	119518
Headteacher	Helen Hesketh
Inspector's name and number	Kathryn Pym 726

School context

Calder Vale St John's is a very small rural primary school in the Forest of Bowland. Since 2009, the school has worked in a formal collaboration with Scorton Church of England School. The two schools share the headteacher. Since the previous inspection, there has been both a change of headteacher and of incumbent. Currently there are 25 children on roll, who are taught in two classes. The school has nursery provision, which is taught within the Key Stage 1 class. The majority of children live in the local villages and are brought to school by mini bus. The vast majority of the children are of white British heritage.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Calder Vale St. John's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The mission statement 'Grow, Achieve, Explore' and Christian values are central to all aspects of school life and ensure that each child is able to flourish and reach their potential.
- Worship inspires and embraces the whole community and provides a daily opportunity for pupils to pray, praise, reflect and learn more about the Christian faith through Bible stories and the Christian values which are fundamental to the school.
- The inspiring leadership of the headteacher, based on a strong Christian vision is very well supported by staff, governors and parents ensuring a clear partnership and commitment to school improvement.
- Spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding and provides the pupils with self confidence and motivation to make a difference to others locally, nationally and internationally.

Areas to improve

- To provide all pupils with opportunities to learn about the universal Christian church in order to deepen their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural, world-wide faith.
- To broaden pupils' understanding of diversity and differences locally, nationally and internationally so as to deepen their cultural awareness.

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

The school's mission statement 'Grow, Achieve and Explore' is central to school life. This, along with the Christian values that the school promotes, provide the foundations for the creative and engaging curriculum, clear policies and strong relationships. One parent explained that the curriculum was 'grounded in faith'. The school's values are biblically based and pupils have a deep understanding of many Bible stories. The pupils can also explain how these values have a significant impact on their own lives. One child explained 'I need to trust in God just as Daniel did when he faced the lions'. The impact that the values have on their children is recognised by parents 'you can tell which value is being focused on as it changes my child's behaviour at home'. Based on its embedded Christian values, the pastoral and academic needs of all pupils are met exceptionally well through personalised learning programmes. The exceptional quality of provision, along with the self-confidence and belief that is instilled in the children ensures that they are effectively able to strive to meet their full potential. As a consequence pupils make outstanding progress with their learning. Due to extremely small cohorts, national and local comparisons can be misleading. However current standards attained were in line with other schools, locally and nationally. Pupils develop exceptionally well spiritually alongside a deep understanding of social and moral issues. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary and they understand that this is as a consequence of the deeply embedded values that are central to all relationships. Charitable giving is clearly seen as part of the school's Christian foundation and contributes well to spiritual, moral and social development. There are many examples of pupils seeking to make a difference as an expression of the school's Christian foundation. This includes, for example, distributing harvest gifts to residents in the village and the joint sponsorship with the Mothers' Union of a child in Uganda. Understanding of cultural diversity is not as well developed. Likewise, pupils' understanding of Christianity as a world-wide faith is under-developed. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school life and therefore attendance is very high. The learning environment is used extensively and effectively to promote understanding of the beauty of God's world and to provide outstanding and creative learning opportunities for pupils of all ages. During an observed religious education (RE) lesson the grounds were used to re-enact the journey made by Mary Jones to obtain her first Bible. This inspired the children who responded extremely well to challenging and thought provoking questions. As a consequence learning outcomes are excellent.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is inclusive, inspirational and central to school life. It not only unites the school family, but reaches out to the community. Worship defines the ethos of the school and challenges everyone to aspire to live out their Christian values. The whole school is regularly involved in Sunday worship. In addition, the inter-generational activities and events such as the Passion Play, which is written and acted by the pupils are pivotal to village life. These activities impact positively on pupils' sense of self and of living in community with others. Worship often takes place in the school grounds and St. John's church, which enhances a sense of awe and wonder. In response to an issue in the previous inspection report, the school now provides many opportunities for the pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship. The pupils value this involvement and make a significant contribution through it. This process has been extended to encompass planning and learning aspects of Sunday worship with the incumbent. Worship is biblically based and provides pupils with a deep understanding of the importance of Jesus for Christians and the values that the school promotes. Anglican greetings and prayers provide an effective structure to worship. This, along with a school Eucharist each term, helps to provide them with a deeper understanding of Anglican traditions. Pupils have an age-appropriate appreciation of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Worship is vibrant, creative, engaging and provides pupils with the opportunity to pray, reflect, learn and praise God. The singing is particularly strong. Opportunities for prayer are made throughout the day and pupils take great pride in their well-used class reflection areas. All staff are involved in planning, leading and delivering worship in school and value the daily opportunity to pray together with the pupils. Worship is very well led through a member of the partner school, who monitors its impact and provides opportunities for the two schools to unite in worship. Evaluation takes place with the whole school community and parishioners who often attend school worship. This evaluation is then used effectively to plan and deliver future services.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is taught creatively and embraces the opportunity that the unique learning environment provides, through

planning highly engaging and reflective activities in the woodlands, outside classroom and other areas. Planning ensures opportunities for children to learn from and about religion and meets the requirements of the Standard of Entitlement for RE in Church of England Schools. The curriculum is based on the diocesan scheme of work over a four year programme, which is further enhanced by in-depth studies of world faiths. As a consequence, pupils are knowledgeable and are able to articulate why faith is so important in people's lives. However, pupils' cultural diversity is less well developed especially through learning opportunities that focus on Christianity as a world faith. Staff meet regularly with the partner school to moderate RE and agree levels of attainment. This has strengthened progress significantly since the previous inspection. RE is led by a dedicated, knowledgeable and passionate leader, which ensures a very high profile for RE teaching and learning. Monitoring procedures are rigorous and involve link governors as well as the subject leader. Pupils enjoy RE lessons and feel challenged by activities. Creative teaching methods ensure that different learning needs are met through detailed planning and organisation. There are strong links between RE and worship particularly through the effective teaching of Bible stories and exploration of Anglican practices. Pupils enjoy learning about world religions and particularly value visits to places of worship and welcoming visitors into school. As a consequence, they are able to understand similarities and differences between faiths and articulate why faith is important to people. RE learning is further enhanced by spirituality days with the partner school, which pupils look forward to and value. Such days give them a deep understanding of the school values alongside aspects of the RE curriculum.

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

The headteacher has a very clear and consistent vision for the school's Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness which clearly supports and drives forward developments as a church school. The focus is very much on ensuring that each pupil is given the opportunity to flourish and reach their full potential as 'children of God'. The vision unites governors, staff, families, St John's church and the local community to provide an excellent Christian education for the pupils. The school has grown physically and spiritually (since the appointment of the headteacher in 2012.) The mission statement and values are lived out in this distinctively Christian environment and through the whole curriculum, which provides numerous opportunities for spiritual, social and moral development. As a consequence, standards are in line with or above other schools locally and nationally, reflecting excellent progress for all children through individual learning programmes. Self-evaluation involves the whole school community and is accurate in measuring strengths and areas for development. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and provide appropriate challenge and support to the headteacher. This ensures clear school improvement, which secures the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Partnership with St John's parish is strong and integral to the school's daily life and mutually supports the families that they serve. One parent explained that since her child became part of the school, she has developed her own faith due to school Sunday services and other church-school events. The newly appointed incumbent and headteacher share ambitious plans to further develop this partnership, such as the use of Worship leaders in church. These plans are in the process of being developed. Partnership with parents is strong and nurturing: 'the whole family is nurtured and loved so that children can flourish'. The school benefits significantly from its relationship with the partner school and now looks to enhance the pupil's understanding of diverse cultures through planned work with another school. Links with the Diocese are strong and staff have benefitted from its Christian Leadership programme as well as professional development for RE teaching. Statutory requirements for worship and RE are met and both areas are given a high priority in school life which leads to highly effective practice in both areas. The impact that the school has on the community it serves is summarised by one governor; 'This school is a real gem. It is the perfect place to learn and grow.'

SIAMS report (September 2016) Calder Vale St. John's, Garstang, Lancashire PR3 1SR