

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

### Beetham Church of England Primary School

Stanley Street, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7AS	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Carlisle</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Cumbria
Date of inspection	01 March 2018
Date of last inspection	08 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 112313
Headteacher	Wendy Nicholas
Inspector's name and number	Jo Williams 863

#### School context

Beetham Church of England school is much smaller than an average primary school. The number of pupils has doubled since the last inspection to 57. Over half of the pupils travel to the school from outside the village of Beetham. The pupils are predominantly White British. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is slightly above the national average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is significantly below the national average. The local vicar left her post in August 2017 and there remains a clergy vacancy in the parish.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Beetham CE School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Highly effective relationships across the school create a safe and nurturing environment. This contributes to pupils feeling safe and valued.
- Christian values are rooted in Biblical teaching and permeate all aspects of school life. They effectively support pupils' well-being. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the values as distinctively Christian.
- An exceptionally strong partnership with the local church enriches the lives of parishioners and pupils alike. Parishioners' daily visits to the school strengthen relationships between church and school.
- Collective worship makes an excellent contribution to spiritual development. Pupils' involvement in the leadership of worship has made a significant impact on its development.

#### Areas to improve

- Provide a range of thinking skills activities in Religious Education (RE) lessons so that pupils develop skills of religious literacy, including analysis, evaluation and interpretation.

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

The Christian character permeates all aspects of the daily life of the school. Parents, staff and governors describe the school as a big family. One parent observed, 'God's love is shared across the school'. As a result, the Christian character has a positive impact on pupils' achievement as they feel individually supported by the school. The headteacher explained that 'everybody is accepted, we're all part of God's family'. The Christian character is reflected in the way each child is truly cherished. As a result, pupils are exceedingly keen to attend school and behave exceptionally well. A parent commented that this extends beyond the pupils in that 'every single one of us is valued'.

Core Christian values, such as generosity and forgiveness, are lived out by the whole school community. Values are firmly rooted in Bible teaching. For example, in an RE lesson, a pupil connected Jesus' words, 'Love your enemies', to the parable of the good Samaritan. Christian values are also key to supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. One pupil explained that they drew on the Christian value of perseverance when facing challenging tasks. Parents gave examples of their children displaying the school's Christian values at home, for example, being thankful for food or forgiving a little sister. Exemplary behaviour is attributed to the way Christian values result in relationships founded on mutual respect. Highly effective relationships are enjoyed across the school community. Adults model Christian values and know each individual child well.

The school is committed to maintaining links to ensure that pupils gain a deep understanding of diversity. A recent international partnership has resulted in pupils corresponding in French with their counterparts in Senegal. As a result, pupils have acquired an insight into global similarities and differences. RE has a prominent place in the school curriculum. It develops pupils' understanding of world faiths such as Islam and pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for others with different cultural and faith backgrounds. Through both RE and worship, they gain a thorough knowledge of Christianity as a multicultural worldwide faith. Pupils are inspired by the subject. Consequently, the impact of RE is felt beyond the classroom, supporting the school's Christian character and deepening pupils' understanding of Christian beliefs and practices.

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

Collective worship is highly valued and greatly enjoyed by the wider school community. Worship is sensitively planned to ensure that it reaches out to all who are taking part. It provides pupils with a rich experience which is relevant to their daily lives. For example, a moving video clip of Derek Redman's defeat at an Olympic games was used to great effect. It enabled worshippers to reflect upon Redman's resolute perseverance and his father's unconditional love and support. As a result, worship has a particularly positive impact on the whole school community. A volunteer commented that after worship there is 'a real sense of calm across the school'.

Collective worship is rooted in important Christian beliefs. It draws upon Bible stories and key texts to illustrate themes. For example, pupils re-enacted the parable of the lost sheep, enriching their understanding of God's love for us all. Worship effectively supports pupils' understanding of the school's core Christian values, such as friendship. The lighting of three candles and carefully chosen prayers help children to understand the Holy Trinity.

Pupils have a sound knowledge of the church calendar. This is supported by the toy resource, 'Vicar Freddie', who is dressed in seasonally coloured robes and coloured worship cloths for different Christian seasons. Collective worship supports pupils' spiritual development by developing their understanding of prayer. Pupils have a good knowledge of traditional prayers and speak of how prayer matters to them. They describe different ways to pray and different types of prayers they could use. One child described prayer as 'sending a message to God'. Another pupil shared that 'we all pray in different ways, none of them are wrong'. Members of the church community enrich the spiritual life of the school by leading prayers each week. The 'Beehive' outdoor area is imaginatively constructed, providing different ways for pupils to engage in quiet time. This contributes effectively to pupils' wellbeing as it provides a welcoming space where they can reflect.

There is strong leadership of worship. In response to the previous SIAS inspection, there have been significant developments in pupils' leadership of worship. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to contribute to worship led by adults as well as leading parts of worship independently. This results in high levels of interest and engagement by all participants. Evaluation of collective worship makes an effective contribution to planning. Governors, staff and

pupils across the school provide feedback, both written and verbal. One request from pupils resulted in greater opportunities for pupils to act out scenes during worship.

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

RE has a high profile in the daily life of the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about RE. One pupil explained that he particularly enjoyed RE 'because there are always loads of new things to learn'. Pupils' individual progress in the subject is good and standards are comparable to those in other areas of the curriculum. A 'big questions' approach engages pupils in thinking about the underlying themes in RE. However, pupils do not use a wide range of high level thinking skills to support their deeper learning in the subject.

The teaching of RE is consistently good and staff use imaginative approaches. The range of strategies used by teachers has a positive impact on pupils' engagement and understanding. For example, a moving re-enactment of the last supper enabled Key Stage 1 pupils to experience some of the different emotions felt by Jesus' disciples. Bright displays across the school celebrate pupils' work in the subject. These include models of Islamic gardens and pupils' own designs of Armenian crosses. Pupils acquire a secure knowledge of the far ranging topics covered in the subject. The RE curriculum is predominantly Christian in line with guidelines in the local diocesan syllabus. RE also supports pupils' good understanding of other world faiths. Visits enrich their experience of RE. A recent trip enabled the Key Stage 2 class to compare similarities and differences in several Christian churches from different denominations.

The subject leadership of RE is robust and has a positive impact on standards in RE. There are clear systems for monitoring both the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Likewise, effective peer coaching, rigorous governor monitoring and focused staff meetings all have a significant impact on the quality of RE.

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

Leaders are highly effective in articulating the distinctively Christian vision. They clearly express how the vision is underpinned by core Christian values, such as respect and friendship. As a result, staff are proactive in sharing Christian values throughout the school day. For example, to help resolve a playtime squabble, pupils draw on these values and think about what Jesus might do. A governor explained that the vision is firmly rooted in the teachings of Christ and that it focuses on caring for one other. The headteacher summed up the vision, saying, 'It's about celebrating uniqueness. We're all special in God's family.' As a result, the Christian vision has a positive impact on pupils' academic standards and wellbeing, because each child is nurtured and cherished. Therefore, the school is committed to meeting the specific needs of every child. In reflecting on the school's Christian character, a parent described its impact as providing the pupils with 'faith to flourish and wings to fly'.

Staff and governors know their school well and this results in rigorous strategic planning for sustained school improvement. Governors' monitoring visits provide both insight and challenge for the improvement planning process. The school's leadership is committed to ongoing leadership development. The headteacher has shared key points from attending the Christian Leadership Programme and governors are committed to extending this training to more staff.

RE is well led and there is effective collective worship. As a result, both are extremely important in the life of the school and meet statutory requirements. The school enjoys a variety of purposeful partnerships. These range from activities with other schools to international links. Although the parish is currently without a vicar, members of the congregation demonstrate determination in maintaining a strong relationship with the school. Parishioners visit the school on a daily basis and both church and school enjoy the benefits. One volunteer remarked that working with the school breathes new life into the church. Parents reflected on how the school's Christian ethos impacts on relationships and supports their children. One parent commented, 'It's such a nurturing environment, whatever challenge comes along, the school is always there for them.'