

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

### Allithwaite Church of England Primary School

Church Road, Allithwaite, Grange over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 7RD

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Outstanding**

**Diocese**

**Carlisle**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Cumbria

Date of inspection

1 February 2018

Date of last inspection

November 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled Primary 112282

Headteacher

Gillian Elliott

Inspector's name and number

Ann Aspden 858

#### School context

This smaller than average primary school serves the rural village of Allithwaite and surrounding areas on the Cartmel peninsular in west Cumbria. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is below the national average. The number of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives extra funding is fewer than usual. The headteacher has been in post since September 2015. Since the last inspection, the school has started to admit pre-school children and also runs a weekly toddler group.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Allithwaite as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values are articulated and understood by pupils, staff, governors and parents. They are embedded into all aspects of the school's life and result in a loving, harmonious and vibrant worshipping community. They are demonstrated in the excellent relationships that exist between all members of the school community and its happy, well behaved pupils.
- The headteacher's strong Christian vision and leadership directs and inspires school improvement. It is enthusiastically shared and supported by the school community. It has a very positive impact on the progress and well being of the pupils.
- Leaders have an exceptional understanding of the school's performance and Christian distinctiveness based on effective and insightful self-evaluation.
- Collective worship is central to the life of the school. It is varied, relevant and valued by all members of the school's Christian family. Worship leaders ensure that collective worship effectively develops understanding of Christian values and beliefs.

#### Areas to improve

- Complete the review of the school's vision by involving the whole school family in order to more widely share understanding of the Christian vision and its theological basis.
- Develop further opportunities for pupils' enjoyment of prayer and reflection using both the indoor and outdoor environment. This is to further develop pupils' individual spirituality and their understanding of prayer and reflection.

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

From their first day in school, every pupil is welcomed as a valued and special member of the school's Christian family. The school's strong and long established Christian heritage is underpinned by specific Christian values rooted in biblical teaching. The learning environment enhances pupils' personal development, progress and academic achievement through the use of the creative arts. Examples of high quality pupils' art work, such as the Christian values silk wall hangings, reflect the school's ethos. Pupils make very good progress from their starting points. The school's Christian mission statement expresses the shared commitment to ensuring that every child achieves their potential. As a result, pupils know that they are valued. This contributes to their exceptionally good behaviour and attitudes. The way pupils are valued is demonstrated through the compassionate and caring nature of the support given to pupils with special educational needs by both adults and pupils. A Key Stage 2 pupil explained what he had learnt from Christian values when he said 'They give me direction in my life. I feel that at I am doing Jesus' work.'

A clear and distinctive Christian ethos guides all aspects of school life and is visible throughout the school. It is made explicit to all who visit by the high quality displays and Christian artefacts. Pupils talk enthusiastically about these, thereby demonstrating their spiritual awareness. From an early age, pupils begin their spiritual journey and readily articulate the impact that learning about Jesus has on their lives. Pupils say that they treasure the Bible that they are given when they leave the reception class. The strong Christian ethos and high quality spiritual, social, moral and cultural development have a very positive impact on the well being of staff and pupils. Pupils flourish and feel safe and loved. They prosper academically, spiritually and socially. Staff and parents say that this is because of the way Christian values, such as friendship and compassion, impact on both school and family lives. Relationships reflect the values lived out by all members of the school family. Parents are firmly committed to the six core Christian values which they helped to choose. They feel that they play a significant part in ensuring that the Christian ethos is lived out on a daily basis. Parents and grandparents value the way in which their children are nurtured and appreciate the warmth that they are shown.

Pupils enjoy RE lessons. They provide a firm foundation for the teaching of the Christ-centred values that drive the school. Pupils have a very good understanding of and respect for diversity and other faiths. However, they are not yet fully aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and this is an area that the school has identified for further development in its self- evaluation.

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

Collective worship is at the heart of the school. It has a very clear focus on the Bible and children's spiritual development. It inspires the day to day actions of the whole community. Acts of worship are valued. They are enjoyed by staff, children and parents who talk about how they enrich their lives. Worship leaders ensure that high levels of spiritual and moral reflection are an intrinsic part of every act of worship. Pupils speak with clarity about the Holy Trinity, the related symbolism of Bible, cross and candle and different aspects of Holy Communion. Collective worship focuses on the presence of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils welcome the school community to worship with the words 'May the light of God's presence...' and describe Jesus as the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace and a guide for life. All members of the school community display great enthusiasm and passion during carefully planned acts of worship. An example of this was the outdoor worship that focussed on the theme of new life. As a result both pupils and adults were eager to praise and thank God through prayer and song at the top of their voices.

Personal prayer is important to pupils. This is witnessed both by staff, governors and visitors in school and by parents at home. Children respond to worship by writing their own prayers and making prayer requests in the classroom prayer and reflection areas. The outdoor reflection area is very effectively managed by pupils from the worship group. As a result, pupils say that they enjoy expressing their thoughts and feelings through prayer and reflection under the guidance of their peers. However, providing the resources to support a wider range of interactive prayer experiences is something the school is keen to develop further.

The leadership of collective worship is of a very high standard. Since the last inspection, the role that pupils play in leading collective worship has developed significantly. The worship group and pupils in individual classes research, plan and lead worship confidently and successfully. An example of this was when Key Stage 2 pupils led worship linked to the Christian value of hope. They created a relaxed and reverent atmosphere using music, Bible readings and their own prayers. Links with St Mary's church are strengthened by the dedication and involvement of the vicar. She works in very close partnership with the headteacher to ensure that collective worship is inspirational and inclusive. The children enjoy their weekly visits to the local church and also visits for special services and festivals. Parents and other members of the school community are involved in monitoring and evaluating collective worship. Their feedback has an excellent impact on the planning of acts of worship. They say that worship is a

celebration and that it actively promotes the school's Christian ethos with a clear focus on love and friendship. They are delighted to join their children for worship because it allows them to feel part of the school's deeply Christian worshipping community. The weekly Monday morning service in church is one of the popular ways in which the school is successfully encouraging families to actively engage in collective worship.

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

Since the last inspection, standards continue to be high and the school's distinctive Christian character has been successfully developed. The school's Christian vision is for a school where Christ's teaching and Christian values guide all aspects of school life. Examples of this include the school's Power of Prayer day and the Hope Blossoms project. Many pupils readily express their belief that God is with them on their journey through life. The school is engaged in a review of its Christian mission in order to more widely share a deeper understanding of its vision. Leaders and the staff team are ambitious for the school. They are united in ensuring that they provide the very best for all those in their care. They live out and promote the school's Christian ethos by following Christ's example in their everyday teaching and lives. This is much appreciated by parents, other members of the church and the local community. They say that they are proud to be part of a school which has the Christian faith at its heart. Leaders celebrate the way in which members of the school community are committed to the school's Christian ethos. In recognition of this commitment, every pupil has an opportunity to proudly wear a red VIP t-shirt and pupils of all ages receive the headteacher's Christian value award each week. These awards help children to understand the importance of Christian values.

Parents are enthusiastic about the many opportunities that they have to engage in the life of the school. Examples of this are the development of an outdoor prayer and reflection area and the very successful Christmas fair. Parents feel that their opinions are heard and that they can influence and support the school's Christian character. One parent commented, 'There is something very special about Allithwaite. The values and the Christian ethos give every one of us the opportunity to see the world through God's eyes and to appreciate the beauty of God's world.' Governors have an excellent understanding of standards in collective worship as a result of their presence in school and the discussions that they have with senior leaders. They have secured strong leadership for collective worship and RE. They support and resource both effectively and both meet statutory requirements. They ensure that formal and rigorous procedures for self-evaluation lead to strategic planning. Partnership with the diocese supports church school improvement and leadership effectively. Governors and staff attend and lead school briefings and diocesan meetings. This means that they are very well informed about current developments in church school education. The professional development of teachers relating to their work in a church school is effective and opportunities are given to all staff to develop their roles and responsibilities.

Church links are very strong. They are mutually beneficial and support the spiritual growth of both the school and the church. The school demonstrates the compassion it has for local and global communities by supporting charitable projects such as those involving residents in the local rest home and the families in a Ugandan village. As a result of charitable fund raising, pupils have a thorough understanding of the meaning of Christian values such as hope and compassion. Pupils demonstrated this when they explained the importance of the work that they had done in helping to build a school in an African village. School councillors speak proudly about how charitable work, such as the work that they do for the charity Children of Hope, is linked to Christian values. One pupil said, 'The charity work that we do is all about being a good citizen and living your life like Jesus did.'

SIAMS report February 2018, Allithwaite Church of England Primary School, Grange over Sands, L11 7RD