

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Langdale Church of England Primary School

Chapel Stile, Great Langdale, Ambleside, Cumbria LA229JE

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Carlisle
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Cumbria
Date of inspection	24 November 2016
Date of last inspection	11 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 112321
Headteacher	Sally Jenkinson
Inspector's name and number	Caronne Field 866

School context

Langdale Church of England Primary School is a very small rural school situated in the Langdale Valley within the Lake District National Park. The 32 pupils are predominantly of White British heritage and from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils with additional needs is above the national average. A small number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes of staff and leadership. The headteacher has been in post since January 2015.

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

- Distinctive Christian values are evident in the way everyone in the school family cares for one another, with the result that pupils make good personal progress and achieve well.
- The Christian vision and commitment of the headteacher, supported by staff, governors and parents, inspires all aspects of improvement.
- Pupils experience high quality creative and reflective learning experiences, both within and beyond the school environment, which enhance the spiritual development and well-being of all pupils

Areas to improve

- Embed a structured approach to monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness, religious education (RE) and collective worship. This is to ensure that self-evaluation effectively informs development planning.
- Develop understanding of links between Bible stories and Christian values, so that children of all ages recognise these values as explicitly Christian.
- Create opportunities for children to engage with other faiths and cultures through visits to a range of places of worship and global partnerships. This is to develop pupils' understanding of diverse faiths and cultures.

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

Christian values are evident in secure and nurturing relationships between all members of the school community. Staff and governors live the school's vision, 'God's love through our words and actions.' Parents value the high levels of compassion and care demonstrated by staff. They describe the way in which 'every child is valued for the individual gifts they bring' and believe this ensures children feel happy and safe. The school's distinctive Christian character is reflected in a strong commitment to meet the needs of all children, including the most vulnerable. This ensures children make good progress from their starting points and standards of attainment continue to improve. In this inclusive learning environment, behaviour is exemplary and attendance is high. Pupils develop an understanding of Christian values and some older children are able to explain Christian teachings about these values. They explain the importance of compassion in their own relationships with reference to the story of the Good Samaritan. One pupil said, 'It's important to look after each other, especially when someone is hurt or upset.' They are respectful of difference and say it is important to make sure everyone feels part of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is underpinned by a wide range of learning experiences which reflect its distinctive Christian character. For example, a recent project on global stewardship gave pupils the opportunity to explore deeper questions and to express their ideas through RE, art and drama. This has a significant effect upon their thinking and attitudes. The school has a strong commitment to Christian service and supports several charities, including the local Macmillan coffee morning. Pupils enjoy being actively involved in RE lessons and are increasingly reflective learners. A focus on contemporary world issues, such as the example of courage shown by Malala, helps pupils understand their place in the world and their responsibility to others. However, the school recognises that wider experiences, such as visits to other places of worship and links made through global partnerships, will further develop pupils' understanding of issues of diversity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an inclusive and important focus of daily life. 'Worship gives us time to pray and reflect, to be thankful and talk to God,' explained one pupil. Careful planning ensures that through worship children reflect on a range of Christian values, Bible stories and festivals. The introduction of 'Values for Life' materials is having a good impact on pupils' understanding of Biblical teaching about Christian values. Pupils speak with pride about times when they have received the special 'red school sweatshirt' in weekly celebration assemblies as an award for showing care and concern to others. They link this to the school's Christian values, explaining that Jesus gives us an example of how we should live our daily lives. The school community gather for worship in a reflective space described by the headteacher as the 'heart of the school.' This creates a strong sense of purpose and belonging. Children also experience worship in other settings. One pupil writes, 'It was nice to reflect and be still in the woods during our Remembrance service. It gave us time to think and pray for others.' Children regularly contribute to worship and know their contributions are valued. For example, they compose their own prayers of reflection, read poems, or make a poppy wreath to place in the woods. This results in worship that is memorable and an effective expression of children's thoughts and feelings. Well-established links with Holy Trinity Church provide pastoral support and enrich worship. Children's spiritual development is supported well through worship and activities led by the vicar. Services held in church, and events such as Experience Harvest, celebrate special events in the church and school year. As a result, children are becoming familiar with some Anglican traditions and prayers. They also gain some understanding of the nature of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Children are increasingly taking on responsibility for elements of worship, for example, leading parts of worship, selecting songs and reading prayers. Consequently, children have a variety of rich and memorable experiences, which effectively contribute to their understanding of Christian beliefs. Leaders recognise the need to embed strategies to evaluate worship that involve all stakeholders.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children enjoy RE because they have frequent opportunities to explore questions of meaning and express ideas creatively through art, writing and drama. Teachers promote critical thinking skills through an enquiry led approach that makes learning exciting, purposeful and relevant. They are particularly adept at matching work to the needs of individuals and small mixed-age groups. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils were fully engaged through storytelling, role-play and skilful questioning. As a result, children responded thoughtfully to the question, 'What gift would you give to the baby Jesus?' and were able to talk about gifts as an expression of their love and caring. RE

books show that children value RE and achieve well. Attainment and progress in RE is in line with other core subjects. Teachers give insightful feedback in books and lessons. This helps children to understand how to improve and informs future planning. RE supports understanding of Christian values. The curriculum enables pupils to learn about and learn from Christianity and other major world religions. This enhances pupils' understanding of and respect for diversity. When learning about Diwali one pupil commented that light is an important symbol for many religions, explaining, 'Light is a symbol of hope. It shows people the way when everything else can be dark.' The good work of the new RE coordinator, supported by the headteacher and a foundation governor, is resulting in a clear vision for RE and effective strategies to secure improvement. She has implemented a new assessment scheme and started to collect a portfolio of work. The monitoring and evaluation of RE is not yet fully embedded and this is an aspect for development.

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

The headteacher provides thoughtful and compassionate leadership. Since her appointment, she has won the confidence and support of the whole school community. She has effectively led the school through a period of change and is building on its strengths. Her initiatives have had a good impact on the Christian character of the school. They support an inclusive learning environment underpinned by Christian values where all children can flourish. The headteacher and her newly established team live this vision. Governors praise the leadership of the headteacher and the direction in which the school is moving. Leaders work collaboratively with a renewed sense of purpose. The school's distinctive Christian character and values are now standing items on the agenda of each governing body meeting. Governors are increasingly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school. They ensure that church school issues are included in school development planning. Decisive action by the headteacher and RE coordinator to address issues from the last inspection ensures both areas continue to improve. RE and collective worship have a positive impact on the life of the school and meet statutory requirements. Professional development is linked to school improvement and is preparing future leaders of church schools. The views of stakeholders are sought through questionnaires that comment on the effectiveness of the school as a church school. However, there is still more to do to ensure that self-evaluation contributes effectively to strategic planning of church school distinctiveness, including RE and collective worship. The school is highly regarded by the whole community. This is because there are very effective partnerships between the school, parents, church and the community it serves. All children contribute to school meetings and know that their views are taken into account in school decision making. They are very proud of their school and all their achievements. Parents appreciate the openness of the school and respect the way in which it enables all children, regardless of need, to grow up feeling a valued part of the school community. Governors say this reflects the commitment of the headteacher and her staff team to ensure 'families are not walking on their own.'

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