



**National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report**

**Carsington and Hopton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Carsington  
Matlock  
Derbyshire

DE4 4DE

**Previous SIAS grade:** Good

**Diocese:** Derby

Local authority: Derbyshire

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 112878

Headteacher: Peter Johnston

Inspector's name and number: Alastair Wood 575

**School context**

Carsington is a very small school of 36 pupils divided into 2 mixed age classrooms. Almost all the pupils are white British and a small number of pupils have special needs. The school is part of the Village Federation having formally amalgamated with Kirk Ireton Voluntary Controlled primary school in September 2015. It is situated close to St Margaret's Church and the headteacher has been in post at Carsington for 3 years.

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

- Very strong Christian leadership results in a school described as the beating heart of the community
- The close links between the school St Margaret's church and the clergy further enhance its unique distinctiveness
- The school's values impact on every aspect of its work and exemplify its Christian character

**Areas to improve**

- Develop pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith
- Enable the worship committee to plan, deliver and evaluate collective worship
- Build a programme of experiences which enables all pupils to fully develop their spirituality

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

'We're happy, we learn, we achieve.' Carsington's motto shapes its vision albeit not explicitly

linked with its Christian foundation. This is a very small family orientated school where everything focuses on the uniqueness of each child. As a result, the warm, caring environment enables pupils to feel safe, happy and individually valued as children of God. The school's key Christian values of respect, kindness, care and forgiveness drive its daily life and give the school its distinctive Christian character and its place at the heart of the village community where it is valued by all. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points and are nurtured in the mixed classes where the older pupils care for the younger ones. Teachers thrive in this small school enabling them to give their best where teamwork ensures all work together sharing the school's vision and benefiting every pupil. The classroom displays are colourful, questioning and stimulating enabling pupils to make connections between the different areas of the curriculum. There are Christian symbols in the entrance and throughout the school, however, while pupils recognise the significance of the symbols and prayer is an important daily feature, their spiritual awareness is at an early stage of development and strategies have yet to be embedded. Parents and governors describe the school as having a happy buzz where their children are keen to learn and want to come to school. RE is of central importance and brings together the pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). The unique character of the school impacts directly on pupils' personal development helping them to understand right from wrong and allowing them to make mistakes in a secure, loving environment. As a result, the pupils are confident, polite and well-behaved. Relationships at all levels of the school are outstanding and when tensions do arise from time to time these are dealt with in a Christian atmosphere of openness, honesty and forgiveness. The pupils say there is no bullying of any type at the school. The school has close links with nearby St Margaret's church and the clergy are regular and influential visitors supporting in a variety of ways, in particular the development of RE and collective worship. Their support is invaluable and cements the links of the federation with Kirk Ireton, building strength through Christian faith. The school council meets regularly and is able to influence directly the things the pupils would like to see in school. For example, the climbing frame, raised beds and a quiet area for reflection were all built as a direct result of the pupils' wishes. The pupils have visited other places of worship and do learn about other faiths in RE lessons but their understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is limited.

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

Worship is a daily event and is a special time of togetherness for pupils and for staff when they attend. Pupils say they enjoy worship especially when they have the opportunity to read a prayer or take part. Worship takes a variety of different formats. On Mondays the worship takes place in St Margaret's church and is led by the vicar and occasionally there is open worship where parents and friends are invited to join the school in the church. On Thursdays it is led by the headteacher in school and all staff attend, other daily worship is led in school by the staff or guests on a rota and is carefully planned with the clergy. Worship impacts directly on the pupils' behaviour and reinforces their understanding of Bible stories and the life of Jesus helping them to make direct links to their own lives. For example, when asked about conflict and tensions, the pupils were quick to describe their actions as: do unto others as you would be done to, exemplifying one of the school's golden rules. The pupils' singing is strong and enthusiastic and they show clear enjoyment, however, some opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual understanding are missed as music is not used to help create a special atmosphere in the classroom and although a candle is lit as a focus during the worship, it is not used for reflection or given significance or meaning. A range of visitors enhance the pupils' experiences of learning about Bible stories and while some evaluation of the impact of worship on the pupils has begun this is yet to become embedded practice. A pupils' worship committee has been set up and the members contribute to worship through reading their own prayers and giving organisational support. The committee has not yet been extended sufficiently to allow them to plan, lead and deliver collective worship, limiting pupils' leadership development. This was an area to address identified in the previous inspection. Prayer is important to the pupils and they use their own prayers during worship and they also say prayers before lunch. They

know the Lord's Prayer and some traditional Anglican responses but are uncertain about their understanding of the Holy Trinity.

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

RE is of significant importance to the school and given equal importance to all the other taught subjects; it is integrated into the whole school curriculum as a separate subject and valued by all. As a result, it impacts on all areas of school life and pupils' knowledge and progress is good. In an RE lesson with the youngest pupils about special people, the teacher introduced the parable of the lost sheep and through skilful questioning helped the children to understand and share the emotions of loss, loneliness and joy. This enabled them to understand the importance of every individual to God and His care for each of them even if they should stray. The older pupils were discussing different places of worship and contrasting features of the Christian church with features of the mosque broadening their experiences of different religions. The subject is well-led and managed by the co-ordinator working with the team and the monitoring of pupils' progress both formal and informal is a regular feature. Teachers' lesson planning is clear, as are the expected pupils' learning outcomes and the planning focuses on individual pupils and ensures that all succeed. The school's assessment tracking shows pupils make good progress and this is fed back to governors' meetings, as a result, all are well informed about the pupils' progress. The Derbyshire agreed syllabus is used effectively allowing pupils to learn from and about religion and school meets the statutory requirement for curriculum time for teaching RE and the balance of other world religions. The curriculum is well resourced and despite a restricted budget, spending on RE is always an important consideration.

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

The school's distinctively Christian vision is driven by the headteacher and during the 3 years of his headship he has transformed the school's Christian character into an environment where all may succeed. He articulates the vision with clarity and in many different ways enabling all to share, believe and deliver its impact so that every child succeeds. The governors are very closely involved with the school and offer the headteacher strong support in day-to-day work, strategic planning and monitoring of the school's progress. They articulate the school's Christian vision with clarity and their effective work impacts directly on the whole school to the benefit of the pupils. Through the headteacher's teamwork and collaboration he ensures the whole school community is valued and respected. Some staff training has taken place and the senior teacher is encouraged to develop her skills deputising when the headteacher is at Kirk Ireton school but opportunities for succession planning and professional training for staff have been limited. The vicar at St Margaret's supports the school by providing a range of inspiring experiences that help the pupils to better understand God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Parents are thrilled with the caring, nurturing environment of the school, the happiness and progress of their children and the quality of teaching. They appreciate the hard working staff and say they make excellent Christian role models for their children. The community is kept informed of all the school's events through a weekly newsletter and the Federation's website. Asked to summarise their feelings about the school, parents describe the school as: 'a family-centred school that values every individual.'

SIAMS report January 2016 Carsington & Hopton VA Primary School, Carsington, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 4DE