

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whalley Church of England Primary School

Church Lane, Whalley, Lancashire BB7 9SY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	28 September 2017
Date of last inspection	March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 119429
Headteacher	Richard Blackburn
Inspector's name and number	Fiona Ashton 860

School context

The school provides the only primary education for the large village of Whalley in the Ribble Valley. The vast majority of the 271 pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils use English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average but has increased in recent years. This is also true of the number of pupils eligible for pupil premium support. Since the last inspection the school has experienced a period of significant transition. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whalley Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Whalley Church of England Primary School, taking its lead from the headteacher, promotes Christian values both implicitly and explicitly in all aspects of school life.
- The governing body and leadership team, ably guided by the headteacher, are rigorous in their self-evaluation. They ensure that all members of the school community understand what it is to be valued, nurtured and successful as a part of a God centred family.
- Pupils achieve very well at this school because of the exceptional care, support and guidance that they receive. This emanates from a strong understanding that each child, as a child of God, is unique.
- Religious education (RE) is an outstanding aspect of pupils' learning. It develops children's understanding of Christianity and other faiths through creative teaching and high expectations.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that evaluation of the school as a Church school includes greater evidence from children and thus indicates the impact of Christian distinctiveness and the example of Christ upon all aspects of their school life.
- Fully embed the new values based approach to collective worship so that children develop a higher level of spiritual understanding and become more confident to independently lead and evaluate worship.
- Encourage further opportunities for personal prayer and reflection by developing additional quiet spaces beyond the classrooms.

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

Whalley Church of England Primary School actively reflects its mission statement. It clearly succeeds in its aim to 'develop and educate each individual child to his or her full potential within a loving and caring Christian community'. Christian values are embedded in the language of the school and children speak confidently about generosity, friendship and forgiveness. They recognise the impact of these upon the lives of the community. Children achieve very well and make better than expected progress because of the school's relentless pursuit of excellence. Governors and the leadership team are rigorous in their evaluation of the school. They embrace the opinions of stakeholders and use outcomes to plan strategically. There is a shared priority permeating the school that children deserve the very best. This in turn arises from an understanding of each child's uniqueness and value within God's family. The work of the school's established and highly effective learning mentor is central to the well-being of many children and families in the school. She ensures that, when required, children receive early and appropriate support. This enables children to receive additional nurture and therefore thrive. This is a very happy school with excellent attendance. Exclusions are very rare. The Whalley Way, the school's expectation of how the school community behaves, is cherished especially by children. This is because they understand its requirements, value its expectations and know that it is based upon fresh starts, justice and forgiveness. Children speak positively about the reflection sheets that they complete if they fall short of expectations. Parents and staff confirm that already good behaviour and attitudes have been transformed into exceptional ones. School councillors appreciate being involved in establishing the criteria for the Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards.

Through a range of exciting and creative opportunities children are encouraged to grow spiritually, morally, socially and culturally (SMSC). While the vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, the school makes every effort to recognise and celebrate diversity in the wider community. This includes multi-faith weeks, links with the Tanzanian Bethany Project and visits to and from schools with very different ethnic and religious profiles. This enables children to see Christianity as both a diverse and a world-wide living faith. The older children speak with great knowledge and insight about the culture and needs of the Bethany Project. The children have been moved and enriched by meeting members of the project. Children are aware that they are fortunate in their circumstances and understand that, as members of a Christian community, they have a responsibility to look to the needs of others. A Year 6 pupil compared supporting a local food bank to Jesus feeding 5,000 people.

As a result of the exceptional guidance of the RE Coordinator, who has remodelled the RE curriculum, children have an enthusiasm for their learning in RE and teachers show a joy in teaching it. Older children clearly articulate the challenge of their learning in the subject and how it makes a difference to the school community, 'we think about what Jesus would want us to do'. Parents are immensely proud and supportive of the school. They particularly appreciate the 'can do confidence' that the headteacher instils in children and that Whalley Church of England Primary School is one where children love and care for every member of the school family.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a secure and fruitful position in the life of the school. It brings joy to children and staff. It is seen as a time of coming together and praise. When children gather for worship, care is taken to create an atmosphere conducive to reflection and prayer. Through the use of Anglican greetings, the symbolism of the cross and candles and the presence of a Bible, children understand the doctrine of Trinity. Music and images are used to excellent effect. Even the very youngest children show a deep respect for worship by closing their eyes and bowing their heads to pray. Through worship children are encouraged to be involved in different Bible stories, worship music and personal reflection. One pupil explained that by listening to the Bible in worship the 'school really helps you to know about God'. Collective worship highlights the liturgical calendar and develops children's theologically accurate understanding of Christian values. Pupils attend church for key celebrations such as Harvest Festival. The Easter Experience worship saw pupils visit the Anglican, Methodist and Catholic churches to reflect upon different aspects of the Easter message. This is an example of the excellent links that the school has with the Christian family of Whalley and how the school and the parish communities are enabled to grow in their understanding of each other. At present the headteacher leads in the planning of worship and is assisted by the local ministers and key staff in delivering worship that is engaging, enriching and is enjoyed especially by the children. Worship enables the children to understand the breadth of the Christian tradition. Children are enthusiastic about the level of involvement that is expected of them in worship. Teachers lead worship with confidence and ensure that it is memorable. Year 6 pupils described as 'hilarious' a worship that linked the idea of a perfect pancake, a perfect friend and Jesus.

Children are provided with opportunities for prayer outside of formal worship, for example at lunchtime and at the end of the day. Each classroom has an inspiring reflection area that is the focus for class worship and children use these well. Prayer jars into which children place prayers that they have written are highly regarded and children are pleased when their prayers are used. Similarly, they are very proud of the prayer tree in the school grounds and appreciate contributing to it. Children compose prayers with enthusiasm. A Year 5 pupil spoke of not only thanking God for the day that had gone but also 'thanking God for the day ahead'. Staff are encouraged to care for their own spiritual well-

being by joining in school prayers and enjoying the half-termly staff communion.

The headteacher and deputy head are key to the monitoring and evaluation of worship at present and ensure that pupils' reactions and views are evaluated. They are working well with the relatively recently established Ethos Crew to enable them to do this with greater independence. The processes for planning and evaluating worship are in their infancy and need time to develop and embed in the life and culture of the school. Similarly, the pupil Ethos Crew need time to grow into their roles and become more involved in independently planning and evaluating worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Children achieve very well in RE and close to the excellent standards that are achieved in English. The subject is purposefully led and managed by the exceptionally talented RE Coordinator. She is confident of standards of achievement because she benchmarks with church schools locally and monitors standards internally with rigour. Assessment is standardised and used exceptionally well to advance children in their learning. Children respond well to the advice they are given. Staff development days focusing on RE are used to excellent effect and, as a result, teaching and learning in RE has been transformed. RE is now taught creatively to a frequently outstanding but consistently good standard. This results in children approaching their learning with clear enthusiasm and consequently making greater progress than previously. As a result of improved teaching and learning in RE, children have very good knowledge of Bible stories and a sound understanding of their meaning and significance to Christians. In a Year 2 lesson, children empathised with Miriam as she watched over the baby Moses when he was hidden in the riverbank and how she was 'astonished.' when he was found. In a Year 5 class, children made exceptional progress because they were continually challenged and supported in their thinking. Working with an impressive degree of independence, they could clearly articulate how Jesus inspires people and explain who else inspires them. Children show immense pride in their work in RE and teachers frequently use RE as a vehicle for developing pupils' extended writing. It is evident from the responses of the children that teachers demand the very best from them. Religious vocabulary is used with accuracy and ease. Children's understanding of Christianity is enriched through an integrated approach that allows pupils to reflect on the Church's year simultaneously in RE and collective worship. As a result, children have an excellent appreciation of the impact of Jesus upon the lives of believers. The children have benefited from learning about other faiths and show a very good understanding of aspects of Islam and Judaism. There is an excellent balance between the teaching of Christianity and other faiths. Through visits and visitors, children are gaining a secure and insightful understanding of world faiths as well as of Christianity. RE is well resourced.

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

Governors have a high profile within the school. Through links with each year group they create the sense that the school is a cohesive community with a single purpose. Governors are committed to the success of the school as a Church of England primary school and ensure that the school meets its statutory obligation for collective worship and RE. As a result of a rigorous self-review of their effectiveness, governors have enhanced their knowledge and skills so that they provide rigour and support in their governance. There is a shared sense of trust and responsibility among governors. The chair of governors has worked tirelessly to support the headteacher and his fellow governors in their shared ambition to make Whalley Church of England Primary school outstanding by all measures. The headteacher and his leadership team are highly effective. As a result of an accurate understanding of the priorities and core purpose of the school they ensure that the school's recently reviewed mission statement is a reality. Staff are nurtured yet challenged to achieve excellence academically and as a 'caring Christian community'. School leaders model Christian values and principles in their school leadership and therefore ensure that colleagues understand what is unique about leading a church school. They regard the headteacher and governors as honest, critical friends who have a moral purpose in working with, and for, the school. The pace and manner in which the leadership team have brought about improvements to all aspects of the school is impressive and is recognised as such by parents and governors. New staff benefit from a careful induction programme that enables them to appreciate the mission of the school. As a result, all staff feel nurtured and privileged to support children in their development. Parental surveys focusing on church school distinctiveness effectively engage all parents in evaluating this aspect of the school. Parents value this engagement and appreciate that in this, and all other matters, the school keeps them well informed. Outcomes of surveys impact upon the school's strategic planning. This is but one example of the energy that school leaders show in driving the school forward as a focal point of the community that it serves. Children are given many opportunities to show leadership in the school community and beyond. The Ethos Crew and School Councillors feel confident to voice their opinions and see initiatives such as the forest garden as tangible proof that their ideas are valued. The Three Fishes Award provides a focus for children to bring Christian values to life in their school, home, and local community. Thus, the headteacher's compelling vision of a school community where 'every child is doing their best, where there is care for the well-being of every member of the community and where the school reaches out even further to the parish and local community of Whalley' is a reality. This is a school where God's love shines.