

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Beckermet Church of England Primary School

Mill Lane, Beckermet, Cumbria. CA21 2YD

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Carlisle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Cumbria

Date of inspection

11 November 2016

Date of last inspection

11 October 2011

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 112345

Headteacher

Barbara Mayer

Inspector's name and number

Carol Berry 324

School context

This is a small voluntary aided primary school of 83 pupils, situated on the west coast of Cumbria. Pupils are drawn from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnicity. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is 10%. There are fewer pupils than usual with special educational needs and disabilities. Leadership and governance have been stable for a number of years.

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

- The headteacher provides compassionate and inspiring leadership, effectively sharing the Christian vision for the school through her own life.
- Everyone understands and supports the vision for the school as a caring Christian family, where each precious and unique individual is valued.
- Collective worship is inspirational and prompts deep thinking about Christian values. Consequently all members of the school, including the children, have a profound understanding of Christian values and apply these to their relationships or when faced with difficult challenges.
- There is a very strong feeling of community which extends to the wider school family. Children, parents, governors, clergy and non-teaching staff rejoice together, grieve together and provide pastoral support for each other in times of need.

Areas to improve

- Develop the current systems for assessment in RE to ensure that examples of pupils' work across the school are regularly moderated by all staff and collated to support staff development. This is to ensure that all staff have the assessment information they need to plan challenging lessons and set helpful RE targets in feedback to pupils.
- Ensure that governors regularly access training regarding their role as governors in a church school, so that they are equipped to support and challenge the school effectively.

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

Children put Christian values into practice in all aspects of their life. They demonstrate exceptionally high levels of care for each other. Older children are very sensitive to the needs of younger children. They go out of their way to ensure younger children are happy and feel confident when they are working together. Many parents commented on this, one parent saying that this was evident from visits even before his own children started to attend the school. This caring environment means that the school is a happy and secure place to learn, where each child knows that they are valued by staff and other children. Consequently they enjoy their education and achieve well. Attendance is very good. When problems arise, the school provides pastoral support for families to help them to work towards a solution. Behaviour is excellent and any issues are dealt with in a spirit of compassion and reconciliation to enable each unique individual to fulfil their potential. Children have a profound understanding of Christian values. They use the question, 'What would Jesus do?' as a springboard for thinking about how to apply Christian values to difficult situations. Children readily link a wide range of values to Biblical teaching. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 explained, 'Wisdom means making the right choices,' and they linked this to Jesus' parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders, saying that the wise builder took his time and chose a firm foundation whereas the foolish builder chose the quick and easy solution. A Year 2 pupil explained why forgiveness was important, making links to the story of Zacchaeus. Children are able to talk confidently about values explored in collective worship some time ago because they regularly revisit these ideas in the wider curriculum. In a history lesson about the story of Anne Frank, pupils began by exploring the concept of justice. Experiencing injustice at the start of the lesson helped them to more fully understand the feelings of victims and bystanders of the Holocaust. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent. Opportunities for spiritual development are often grasped as they arise in the curriculum. RE makes a very effective contribution to cultural education and pupils have excellent attitudes to diversity. They have a very good knowledge of diversity within Christianity and a sound knowledge of the other faiths studied in RE. Children put compassion for others in the wider world into action through their support of a variety of charities, for example, through the Shoebox Appeal.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Children have excellent attitudes to collective worship. They participate with joyful excitement and sing enthusiastically. The school's shared sense of being a Christian family and children's commitment to caring for others spring from inspiring worship. Children have an excellent understanding of the importance of prayer. This is supported by the reflective tables in every classroom which provide a focus for class prayer. A pupil said, 'If you are in trouble, you talk to God to get it off your mind and to feel better.' Children confidently write prayers which are recorded in class prayer-books. They know their prayers are valued because they are often used in worship. Children enjoy learning a range of worship songs and hymns through the weekly 'Worship through Song'. This act of worship is used to help children understand the meaning of the songs they sing and consequently children talk about hymns as prayers which are sung. Collective worship takes place in a variety of settings and twice a week children meet for worship in class groups or as a key stage. This means that worship is able to meet the needs of children of different ages. As a result, children's understanding of Christian values develops as they progress through school. Younger children talk about kindness and this develops so that older children have a well-developed understanding of the concept of compassion. Leadership of collective worship is very effective. Clergy contribute regularly and develop the school's thinking on the weekly theme. Planning secures consideration of a range of themes, including festivals and a broad selection of Bible stories. However, key beliefs about God are not considered as explicit themes. Consequently, although children have an excellent understanding of God as Father and of Jesus, they have not pulled together Christian ideas about God and have only a simple understanding of what is meant by the Holy Spirit. Children are involved in the leadership of worship, both in its planning and evaluation. Older children plan and lead special services in church which parents say they enjoy attending. A group of children planned and led a remembrance day act of worship. The result was a moving act of worship leading up to the time of silence. However, children's leadership of worship is an area which the school is continuing to develop in order to involve younger children in leading parts of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children enjoy RE and understand its relevance to their own lives. The standard of learning and teaching is always good and is sometimes outstanding. Children experience a range of exciting learning activities which help them to apply their learning to their own lives. RE supports the development of skills of enquiry, for example, working together, thinking creatively, interpreting religious texts and explaining meanings. In a lesson for Years 3 and 4, pupils used a contemporary song to help them interpret the symbolism of a Christingle. The challenge to think creatively made an excellent contribution to the development of their thinking skills. The use of the diocesan syllabus secures a well-balanced curriculum, with appropriate time devoted to Christianity and other faiths. It ensures that pupils make progress as they revisit concepts in different years, with learning outcomes becoming

increasingly challenging. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils moved through a variety of fast-paced activities which helped them to understand the nativity story. Differentiated activities, including dressing up for drama, group work and interpretation of works of art meant that children of different ages and abilities all achieved well. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations and children make good progress. The school have recently introduced effective new procedures for assessment. Teachers record achievements on a chart of 'I can ...' statements whilst assessing pupils' work. However, there has not been any recent moderation of pupils work to ensure that staff have a working knowledge of the key steps to progress in RE, neither is there a collection of pupils' work to support staff development. Consequently, RE specific targets are not used by staff in feedback to pupils and occasionally the tasks set for pupils are not appropriately challenging. More experienced staff have benefitted from training from the diocese which made a good impact on the quality of teaching and learning, but the school recognise that this is an area which needs to be re-visited to meet the needs of newer staff. Leadership of RE is good. Regular informal self-evaluation informs planning and leads to improvements.

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

All members of the school community have a sound understanding of the Christian vision for a community which lives by Christian values and where each unique individual is valued. The consultation process which led to the revision of the mission and ethos statement involved all stakeholders and has helped all to understand the vision. Inspirational leadership from the headteacher underpins the implementation of the school's Christian vision. Staff and governors describe the sacrificial giving of her time to provide pastoral support to pupils, parents and staff. Christian values inform all aspects of leadership and staff live the Christian vision. They are a strong team. The caring atmosphere of the school means that it is a rewarding and secure place to work. Consequently teachers are able to approach their work creatively because they know their ideas are valued. A recently qualified member of staff spoke warmly of the way staff had supported him during his first year. The school family, including non-teaching staff, parents, clergy and governors, is a close community. Following the tragic loss of a member of the kitchen staff, the whole school supported each other in their grief. Clergy provided valued support and the children shared in celebrating her life. There are robust structures for planning and evaluating the school's ethos and collective worship, including consultation with parents and regular feedback to the governors. However, feedback of RE, although effective, is not secured by inclusion in the school's formal cycle of self-evaluation. Collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements. Leadership of collective worship and RE are very effective. The school is committed to challenging and developing staff. It has benefitted from diocesan training on collective worship and RE. Governance is very effective and challenges from the governors have resulted in improvements in the Christian character of the school. The governors are very experienced, but they have not recently received training about their responsibilities in a church school. The school has made a good response to the focus for development from the last SIAS inspection and this has contributed to school improvement. Mutually beneficial partnerships enrich the life of the school, including partnerships with the church, the diocese and the local community.

SIAMS report November 2016 Beckermet Church of England Primary School Cumbria CA21 2YD