

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whittle-le-Woods Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Preston Road, Whittle-le-Woods, Chorley, Lancashire. PR6 7PS

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Blackburn
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Lancashire
Date of inspection	21 September 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 119478
Headteacher	Deborah Metcalfe
Inspector's name and number	Jo Williams 863

School context

Whittle-le-Woods is an averaged sized primary school with 246 pupils on roll. The school is below the national average for pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals. Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. The school has also established 'The Tripod', an informal special needs unit which supports eight pupils. Over the last decade there has been an increase in a variety local housing. As a result, the school's intake has changed reflecting a broader mix of pupils from different backgrounds.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whittle-le-Woods Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The particularly strong Christian leadership directly impacts on the Christian character of the school. This results in all aspects of school being rooted in a deeply held Christian vision.
- Christian values are deeply embedded and have a significant impact on the daily lives of the school community.
- The innovative and creative approach to religious education (RE) ensures pupils' considerable depth of understanding and enjoyment of the subject.
- Collective worship is profoundly spiritual and greatly valued by the school community as a means to celebrate their faith together.

Areas to improve

- Sustain and review existing effective practices in the assessment of religious education (RE) during a transition period to a new syllabus.

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

The headteacher declares, 'this is God's school'. This belief and the school's distinctively Christian character are reiterated throughout the school richly nurturing pupils' individual lives. Attendance is high and parents speak of their children wanting to be in school. The same Christian ethos permeates pupils' desire to learn and therefore achieving high academic standards. Another parent remarked that the children 'always want to give their best'. Numerous comments describe the school's family feel where everyone is valued regardless of their ability or background, such as 'a big Christian family'. The distinctively Christian character of the school makes a vast difference to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and it is relevant to their daily lives. An example is a pupil's regret following a poor choice saying, 'I did not follow in Jesus' footsteps, I let everyone down'. Pupil behaviour is exemplary and reinforced through Christian values. Such values ensure that the school community thrives on deeply meaningful and sincere relationships which support pupils' wellbeing. A long serving member of staff explained that, 'every child in this school, I treat like my own'. This genuine respect is also reflected in pupils' understanding of diversity. Pupils value learning about different communities and beliefs, explaining that God loves everyone and it helps them 'to know how to react'. For example, pupils encounter deep learning experiences, such as meeting a regular Jewish visitor in school, which enriches their understanding of people of faith. Religious education (RE) plays a significant role in supporting the Christian character of the school. For example, focused activities such as global Christmas traditions ensure that pupils have a firm understanding of Christianity as a multicultural worldwide faith. The distinctively Christian character of the school is compared to Blackpool rock, 'impacting on everything at a deeper level'. As one pupil put it, 'this being a Christian school makes us feel differently about one another, we love one another more'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school places great importance on collective worship. It is highly valued by all members of the school community, having a significant spiritual impact on individuals' daily lives. One staff member commented that collective worship 'sets us up for the day ... together'. Worship is relevant and meaningful, including current events locally and being fully engaged. Pupils are keen to volunteer to bring the worship to life, for example, by reading passages or acting out stories. Music and singing are a particular uplifting and spiritual feature of worship. One pupil commented that, 'singing is special to us because we want to praise the Lord'. Worship is entrenched in the Christian faith and supports pupils in their deepening understanding of the Christian year and Anglican traditions. Visitors regularly enrich pupils' experience of worship. For example, the wider school community had been deeply moved by a recent visit by some Kenyan Christians. A particularly spiritual moment was recounted when the pupils spontaneously and simultaneously joined the Kenyans in singing 'How Great Thou Art' in two different languages. Worship is also a highly effective vehicle in making Christian values meaningful to pupils' daily lives. It raises pupils' aspirations in undertaking charitable actions. In addition, prayer is a key feature of the daily life of the school. As a result, pupils are confident in engaging in their own personal prayer and reflection. An example of this was recounted by a parent who had overheard her child praying at home, the night before the new academic year, asking for God's support and guidance. Worship is thoroughly planned, resulting in excellent coverage of Christian themes. Evaluation of worship is undertaken across the school community which directly impacts on future worship. A simple example of this was noting that the school used a different version of the Lord's Prayer to the local church and changing it to provide continuity. Pupils' understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is enhanced through key prayers in worship. As a result, they are confident articulating their deepening Christian knowledge of the Holy Trinity. Collective worship exemplifies the Christian character of the school, impacting on its spiritual life. The headteacher endorses that, 'it brings them closer to God'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education (RE) has an extremely high profile in the school curriculum. Its importance is as great as mathematics or English. Pupils look forward to their RE lessons and achieve exceptionally high standards in the subject. Rigorous monitoring of the subject exemplifies that the standards in RE compare favourably to other areas of the curriculum. There is a creative approach to the teaching of RE which the pupils find absorbing. One older pupil commented that RE, 'makes you think more deeply to find out the meaning of the bible'. Likewise, pupils are confident in employing a wide range of high level skills to explore the subject which ensures their deeper understanding. For example, a pupil was studying the text, 'Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes'. She used honed thinking skills to understand the underlying message to focus on our inner souls. The RE curriculum is predominantly Christian and meaningful links are made to the school's Christian values. A focus on different beliefs, pertinent visits and visitors has deepened pupils' understanding of multicultural world faiths. One pupil commented that during the world faith units he strived to 'try and understand, to figure out similarities and differences (to Christianity)'. The leadership of

the subject is highly effective. Detailed portfolios of levelled work show very effective monitoring of the subject alongside thorough assessment of pupil progress. These impact on high quality of teaching and learning in RE across the school. For example, when discussing the hymn, 'Lord of the Dance', a pupil commented, 'the devil on his back is metaphoric, Jesus doesn't want to die, He just wants the torment to stop'.

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

The biblical text, 'I have come in order that they might have life and have it to the full', (John 10:10) is at the root of the school's Christian vision. The school's leadership is highly proactive in driving this gospel vision for all pupils. This results in the wider school community living the vision through the shared belief that 'we are God's children doing God's work'. A teacher explained the impact of the Christian vision saying that staff have 'a deep understanding of gospel teaching and have taken it on to be role models for the children'. The school's Christian vision also underpins their desire to make a difference for every child. This is clearly exemplified in the school's 'Tripod' unit, where a specific need has been identified and action taken impacting on both academic achievement and pupil wellbeing. Staff and governors know their school well and this results in highly effective strategic planning for sustained school improvement. Governors spoke of their frequent monitoring visits to the school. One governor explained, 'Christian values are taken into the planning process and that the gospel vision ensured that they are committed to improving'. The staff have tailored access training to support them in career progression. This includes undertaking supplementary national professional qualifications. There is also relevant in house training delivered by the diocese which has provided additional insight into the distinctive character of church schools. RE is exceptionally well led, resourced and managed and collective worship is inspiring. As a result, both have a high profile in the school and meet statutory requirements. The school enjoys a wide variety of mutually beneficial partnerships, both locally and internationally. The local vicar described a 'seamless link between church and school'. Likewise, effective partnerships have impacted on pupils' particularly well developed empathy. This is clearly demonstrated through links with the New Life Baby Rescue Centre in Nairobi. The school's leadership ensure that Christianity is at the heart of everything the school does. The local vicar concludes that, 'it thrills me that the Christian faith is real here'.

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