



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Skerton St Luke's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Slyne Road
Skerton
Lancaster
LA1 2JH

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 19 November 2015

Date of last inspection: October 2010

School's unique reference number: 119534

Headteacher: Catherine Armistead

Inspector's name and number: Tracy Heys 831

School context

Skerton St Luke's Church of England Primary School is a single form entry primary school situated on the outskirts of Lancaster. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly above the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is in line with national expectations. There has been a significant change of staff and governors since the last inspection. The headteacher has been in post for two years and the deputy for one year. A third of the governors have been appointed in the last 12 months.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Luke's as a Church of England school are good

- Strong and effective Christian leadership by the headteacher, supported by dedicated staff, is enabling the school to continuously develop and strengthen as a distinctively Anglican school.
- An ambitious and enthusiastic religious education (RE) leader inspires staff and pupils to achieve high standards.
- Relationships within the school community are exemplary and the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation is central to behaviour management.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that assessment of RE is consistent throughout the school and accurately informs future teaching and learning.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation system for collective worship that involves all the whole school community and leads directly to improvement.
- Involve all members of the school community in the self-evaluation of St Luke's as a distinctively Christian school.

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

There is a distinctively Christian set of values which is central to the ethos of the school. The pupils understand that it is not the values themselves that make a person a Christian. One child said, 'just showing Christian values doesn't make you a Christian; you have to believe that Jesus died for our sins'. The Christian teaching behind the value is shared with the pupils, but they cannot always articulate this. Christian values, such as perseverance and forgiveness, pervade every aspect of the school and make a significant contribution to the excellent behaviour of the pupils, rates of attendance and academic progress. The Christian character of the school makes a positive contribution to the wellbeing of staff and pupils. A parent who has recently moved to the area commented on how special and valued her children feel here. She says, 'They have blossomed because of the caring approach of the staff'. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and independent. Their spiritual journey is given guidance but they are also given the freedom to explore. The pupils comment on how they are given time to reflect on choices they have made. Pupils know each day is a new start 'providing you are sorry for what you have done'. The Christian ethos of forgiveness and reconciliation is clearly evident in all relationships and has developed mutual trust and respect. The staff demonstrate a united team with good communication that enables the needs of every child to be met in a supportive and caring Christian way. A nurture room provides additional support when needed. The school is a fully inclusive community and pupils with special educational needs or from other faith backgrounds are wholly integrated into all aspects of school life. Pupils comment with confidence that they always feel safe and valued. They know that any member of staff will listen and help them if they are anxious or worried. Pupils' knowledge of diversity within the church is improving. Links with Father's House is giving them the opportunity to see people from different Christian traditions at work in their community. The religious education curriculum makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school. Pupils comment on how the skills they are learning in RE can be applied to other areas of the curriculum. However, pupil's awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is limited.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship occupies an important place in the daily life of the school. Through its content it both affirms and strengthens the school's Christian values. This is achieved through distinctly Christian teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. Evidence shows that pupils join in enthusiastically with answers and responses when appropriate and sing superbly. The worship club is taking more responsibility for planning and leading worship, which they clearly enjoy. Their involvement is increasing their confidence and developing self-esteem. Planning of worship is mainly done by the headteacher. However, the new vicar is having an increasing involvement in this. She leads worship on a weekly basis and is a regular visitor to the school. This is helping the vicar to develop relationships with the school community which the pupils value. 'I wish the vicar could come every day, she is good to talk to', commented one pupil. Pupils are able to make links between Bible stories and their own lives. One child said the story of creation reminded her how important it is to care for God's world. The pupils have a developing understanding of the Trinity. 'The Holy Spirit helps you to be strong when things are difficult', said a Year 6 girl. Prayer plays an important part in the daily life of the school and a quiet reflection area in each class ensures that worship goes beyond the gathering in the hall. A prayer box is also available in each class for the pupils to write their own prayers. These are used during the school day, which reinforces the message that all prayers are valued. Good examples include pupils saying, 'I want to pray that the families of those killed in Paris have hope for the future'. A range of appropriate visitors lead worship in school. The pupils also visit the church for worship and the church congregation come to school to join in worship on some occasions. This is strengthening links between the school and the church. Parents are invited into worship too and speak of their enjoyment in sharing this time in school. Involving the whole school community in the monitoring and evaluation of worship is an area for development already identified by the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is regarded by the school as a very important part of its overall curriculum and is taught both as a discrete and a cross-curricular subject. The recent introduction of RE scrap and group books clearly engages the interest of the pupils who say that they enjoy finding out about Christianity and other major faiths. This interest is clearly evident in lessons. Pupils responded well to detailed and searching questions which greatly challenges their thinking. One reception child when responding to a question about what happens at a christening answered, 'God welcomes you into His family'. As a result of good and effective teaching and learning, pupils make good progress from their starting points. A new but enthusiastic and dedicated subject leader has identified needs within teaching and learning which are being rigorously addressed resulting in good overall classroom practice. There is a clear plan for school improvement which is enabling pupils to make rapid and sustained progress. The rich and varied learning activities enable the pupils to acquire a wide range of high level skills. There is an appropriate balance of learning about and learning from religion which helps pupils on their own faith journey. There is evidence that standards of attainment are in line with national expectations for the large majority of pupils. However, the assessment of RE is inconsistent. The school recognises this as a priority for development. Pupils have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of many of the key aspects of Christianity. Older pupils are confident in navigating the Bible. Their wide knowledge of Bible stories enables them to apply Christian teaching to everyday life. However, pupils are less confident with regard to other faiths, which is clearly identified on the school's improvement plan. Links with an outstanding local Anglican school and attendance at RE cluster groups further support the professional development of the new subject leader. This also enables her to keep up to date with current developments in RE.

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

The Christian purpose of the school is clearly identified in the mission statement and is underpinned by the core values that help to create the distinctive ethos. As a result, standards of achievement are in line with national expectations and the wellbeing of all pupils is given a high priority. Collective worship and RE are well planned which ensures they meet the needs of all learners and satisfy statutory requirements. The headteacher models strong, visionary Christian leadership and is highly valued by the whole school community. She now has a stable and committed staff team and the school is rapidly improving. Many of the governors are new and have recently received training from the Diocese on their role in monitoring and evaluating the school as a church school. There are good relationships between the church and the school. Each community supports the other through prayer and in practical and mutually beneficial ways. This has resulted in a strengthening of the school's Anglican character. Succession planning for church school leadership is evident. The new deputy head teacher is receiving appropriate professional training. As a result, he is providing effective support and challenge to the headteacher. The school's RE syllabus helps to impact on Christian distinctiveness by fostering understanding and respect towards the different faith perspectives. The Christian ethos of the school has a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. The individual needs of the pupils are well catered for in a caring, Christian environment. Strong and beneficial partnerships have been formed with the wider community. In particular, the pupils are involved in schemes which benefit the community such as a link with a local retirement home and support for local charities. Discussion with pupils and parents gives clear evidence that, through this, the pupils are developing an understanding of their responsibilities as members of the wider community. Self-evaluation of the school as a church school has taken place. However, this does not always celebrate the good work that is going on in the school, in addressing areas from the previous inspection. The governors have recognised this as an important area for development and appropriate training has been undertaken.