

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Patterdale Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

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| Patterdale, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0NL | |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | Carlisle |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Local authority | Cumbria |
| Date of inspection | 25 May 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | 4 May 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | VA 112326 |
| Headteacher | Elizabeth Stewart |
| Inspector's name and number | Anne B. Woodcock 445 |

School context

Patterdale is a very small, rurally isolated school, 17 miles south of Penrith. The 27 pupils come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The majority are of White British heritage, but the community served by the school is increasingly diverse. Although the proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding for social disadvantage is lower than average, an increasing number of families are in need of multi-agency support. The school supports an average proportion of pupils with additional needs. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. The headteacher teaches a 90% timetable.

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

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by governors, has created and maintained the collaborative staff team. Together they provide a harmonious, distinctly Christian learning community in which every member is valued as unique and special.
- Well-established Christian values inform and direct every aspect of school life. They inspire supportive, nurturing relationships and impact very strongly on pupils' exemplary behaviour and highly positive attitudes to life and learning.
- Highly effective links with the church and local community contribute significantly to the school's distinctive Christian character and to pupils' spiritual and personal development.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the monitoring of collective worship and Religious education (RE) by governors contributes fully to self-evaluation so that it more effectively supports continued improvement.
- Support pupils in the development of their understanding of the Christian concept of the Trinity so that they can more fully grasp the idea of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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

Deeply embedded Christian values inform and direct all aspects of school life. 'We love one another and treat each other with respect. No-one judges us and we are all equal,' stated a Year 6 pupil. Behaviour is exemplary because all pupils use their understanding of Christian love and forgiveness. 'We are all kind and forgiving because that is what Jesus wants us to be,' explained a Year 5 pupil. As a result, the school's Christian character is immediately felt by visitors as it is lived daily by all members of the community. Christian trust and friendship inspire relationships and inform the creative curriculum. Pupils are excited and inspired by lessons and experiences through which they explore God's creation. They strive to meet the aspirational targets set for them, relishing the challenges provided and showing remarkable resilience. All pupils make very good progress from their individual starting points. Those with additional needs are extremely well-supported and they make rapid progress. Although cohorts are very small, standards of attainment are consistently high and they are well-above national expectations.

Provision for pupils' spiritual growth, personal development and well-being is excellent because it is woven seamlessly throughout the creative curriculum. They benefit from frequent high quality learning experiences both in and out of school. These include residential trips throughout Key Stage 2, extra-curricular activities and regular outdoor learning. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply and express their ideas creatively through a variety of media. As a result, they are reflective, confident and articulate learners. Their personal responses are reflected in the high quality of pupils' writing, art and prayer across the curriculum.

The school's vision and values impact strongly on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It is recognisably inclusive and accepting of everyone's talents and abilities. All members of the school family are valued as unique children of God. Christian love and hope direct all aspects of provision. Parents value all that is provided for their children so they are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent stated, 'We have a goldmine here. The school welcomes everyone and we trust the staff implicitly because they give our children so much.' RE makes an outstanding contribution to the school's distinctive Christian character and to pupils' SMSC development. Pupils are fully aware of diverse cultures and faiths and the challenges these present in some areas of the world. The school therefore continues to fully achieve its declared aims to 'provide learning based on inspirational experiences and ensure that Christian values are part of the everyday lives of all at school.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a much valued and integral feature of the daily life of the school. Worship is engaging and inclusive. 'We enjoy worship because we're involved. We learn new things about God, Jesus and ourselves,' stated a Year 5 pupil. Themes based on Bible teaching and Christian values are explored creatively. Pupils particularly enjoy the weekly worship led by the vicar because he always makes things fun and memorable.

Pupils understand God as a loving and forgiving father. A Year 2 pupil wrote, 'Jesus looks after us like a shepherd looks after his sheep.' Older pupils talk confidently about stories from the Old Testament. All pupils are able to recall the events in the life of Jesus celebrated by Christians at Easter and Christmas. However, pupils' understanding of the Christian concept of the Trinity is at an early stage because experiences helpful in developing the concept are not built into worship planning.

The extent to which pupils are engaged in planning and leading worship is outstanding. Individual pupils from Year 2 upwards plan and deliver worship regularly. Many parents support the planning at home, helping their children to research stories, source artefacts and write prayers. As a result, families are engaged in school worship and pupils develop a very clear understanding of different ways in which Christians worship God. Pupils also lead worship in church at festival and other times. Parents and friends attend these services and those in school. They recognise that the leadership roles support their children's spiritual development and self-confidence.

Prayer is a central feature of worship. Pupils write their own prayers, many of which are used at different times of the day. They know the Lord's Prayer and graces and are familiar with some traditional Anglican practices. Pupils are given time to reflect and they make effective use of the quiet spaces in and around the school. Pupils make very effective links between the teaching of Jesus, Christian values and their own actions. 'Jesus is completely perfect. He came to try to make the world perfect again and we have to do our bit by helping others worse off than us,' explained a Year 6 pupil.

The extremely strong, mutually beneficial links with the church contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual growth. Pupils have a close, trusting relationship with the vicar, who provides spiritual and pastoral support for all members of the school community. Other church members are regular visitors. Pupils benefit from occasional visits by people from other local faith groups. This broadens their experience of different styles of Christian worship.

Collective worship continues to develop and improve. Feedback from pupils and staff is used to inform future planning and assess the impact of daily worship. Governors regularly observe worship, monitoring through discussions with staff and pupils.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils' attitudes to RE are extremely positive because they are consistently inspired and excited by their lessons. A Year 6 pupil explained, 'We learn new things about God, what people believe and how they explain it.' The creative, practical and investigative approaches meet the needs of the wide range of abilities within the mixed-age classes extremely well. Teachers have a very sound knowledge of the subject. Pupils investigate ideas and deepen their understanding through well-planned lessons which are resourced with care. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress and levels of attainment are high. This is reflected in some outstanding pieces of writing, through which pupils demonstrate their factual knowledge, empathy and understanding of events.

The diocesan syllabus is used, but the recent addition of the 'Understanding Christianity' resource is already having a significant impact on teaching and learning. The resource has promoted staff reflection and it is supporting the development of even deeper levels of thinking for learners.

The assessment and tracking of pupil progress is robust. Marking is effective and pupils are engaged in self and peer assessment. Staff monitor RE thoroughly, ensuring that it maintains a high profile and that effective links are made across the curriculum. The corporate subject leadership works extremely well and ways are always being found to improve cross-curricular links. Governors monitor the subject informally through visits and discussions with staff.

RE makes a very significant contribution to pupils' SMSC development. They are fully aware of diverse cultures and faiths. They have practical experience of sharing special meals linked to Islamic, Hindu and Jewish festivals. They encounter differences in faiths and cultures from some first-hand experiences. As a result, pupils can talk knowledgeably about similarities and differences and make connections between the different major world faiths. They respect the beliefs of others and recognise that some of the world's problems are due to people who find it difficult to accept that people worship God and live their lives in different ways.

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

The outstanding leadership and management has been skilfully maintained since the last inspection. The headteacher inspires a very high level of commitment which results in shared responsibility and collaboration within the very small staff team. All members of the school community work tirelessly and harmoniously to achieve the school's declared Christian vision to 'work together to foster self-respect, respect of others, compassion, forgiveness and fairness'. Staff 'go the extra mile' to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. This includes fundraising to support additional needs.

Leaders know the school well. The well-established cycle of church school self-evaluation, review of Christian values and the mission statement, engages all members of the school and wider community. It ensures that church school issues, such as assessment in RE, are prioritised within school improvement planning. Governors set challenging targets and analyse data. They are pro-active and meet the challenges of reducing financial and human resources with Christian compassion and creativity. As a result, the needs of all pupils are met, so that all can contribute to the life of the school, make progress and achieve their potential. All members of the school family say that they feel valued. Their contributions are acknowledged and ideas acted upon. As a result, parents feel included and they are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. Governors have secured highly effective leadership for RE and collective worship. They ensure that both areas are resourced and prioritised. However, although governors meet with staff and pupils to monitor RE and collective worship, their observations are not recorded. As a result, opportunities to support the continued improvement of both are missed.

Partnerships with the diocese and the Rural Penrith Cluster of schools, some of which are church schools, are effective in supporting teaching and learning, curriculum development and governance. They therefore contribute to the continued development of the school and support strategic planning. The well-established link with a school in Darjeeling continues to support pupils' understanding of diversity and global issues. Pupils take responsibility for many areas of school life. They support local charities and hold regular community lunches so that they can 'make a difference' to peoples' lives and show compassion for others as Jesus did. The school enjoys a remarkable level of community financial support, without which many of the enrichment and support facilities provided would not be possible.