



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Lees Hill Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Lees Hill
Brampton
CA8 2BB

Previous SIAMS grade: **Good**

Current inspection grade: **Good**

Diocese: **Carlisle**

Local authority: Cumbria

Dates of inspection: 17 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 11 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 112256

Headteacher: Julia Dalgeish

Inspector's name and number: Caronne Field QA Assessor Neville Norcross

School context

Lees Hill Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School is a very small rural school situated in the north east of Cumbria. The 26 pupils who are of White British heritage and from mixed socio-economic backgrounds, are taught predominantly in two mixed age classes. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. In September 2014, the school introduced a nursery year for children from three years of age. There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection. The school has an acting headteacher who took up her post in September 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lees Hill as a Church of England school are good

- The acting headteacher has introduced a range of well-chosen initiatives which have quickly established a happy and thriving Christian learning community.
- The exemplary relationships across the school community are evident in the way everyone cares for one another with the result that pupils make good personal progress and achieve well.
- The governors and staff team are fully committed to the development of the Christian character and to working together to achieve the best outcomes for all pupils.
- Purposeful links with local churches contribute significantly to the school's Christian distinctiveness and to pupils' spiritual growth.

Areas to improve

- To involve the whole school family in a review of the vision statement and aims so that they reflect the school's distinctive Christian ethos.
- To further develop the understanding of links between Bible stories and Christian values, so that children recognise these values as explicitly Christian.
- To review planning models for worship and religious education (RE) to ensure that there is continuity, coherence and progression, along with an appropriate balance and breadth of themes.

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

The Christian character of this small school is expressed in strong and nurturing relationships across the school community. Pupils and their families feel valued and part of a caring and happy school. Parents comment on how older children demonstrate kindness in their care of younger pupils. The school's commitment to meeting the needs of all children, through a personalised approach to their learning, results in pupils making good progress. Christian values have been given a renewed focus throughout the school. Worship, lessons and displays help to reinforce the links between each value and Biblical teaching. As a result, children develop a practical understanding of each Christian value and an appreciation of its impact on their lives. The values develop an ethos that impacts on the pupils' self-esteem and attitudes to learning. One pupil described how he needed to show endurance when he was left behind other competitors in a cross-country race. However, whilst children have thought about these links and can associate a value with a Bible story, they are not always confident about recognising these values as explicitly Christian. Pupils' opinions contribute to the effectiveness of the school's distinctive Christian character. Children show compassion for others through their support for charities such as Lawrence's Roundabout appeal and the Carlisle flood appeal. Parents believe that the school helps children to think about ways in which they can help others and this fosters a strong sense of belonging to a Christian community. 'Children are given lots of opportunities to take on different responsibilities,' explained one parent. Children enjoy and are keen to talk about their learning in RE, explaining, 'The best part is learning about how different people worship and respect God'. Children explore Christianity as a global world faith through collective worship and RE. For example, a display in the school hall describes Easter traditions from around the world. As a result, pupils are developing an understanding that Christians celebrate and worship in different ways. They study different faiths in RE and respect diversity, describing with enthusiasm a recent piece of learning where they were able to pursue their own enquiry on the theme of Sikhism. Visits to the Samye Ling monastery and an established Tanzanian partnership have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to diverse religions and cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to the school day. This is because pupils learn from an early age that worship is a special time for the school community. Children experience a rich variety of activities during worship, including drama, music and time to reflect. These activities help to underpin Christian values and support the strong ethos of the school. Leadership of collective worship draws on the experience of staff, clergy partners and other Christian groups, as well as the skills and enthusiasm of pupils who lead their own weekly worship. Pupils work together to plan worship and are increasingly taking responsibility for decisions about how to make worship better. As a result, pupils' experience of worship is significantly enhanced and they describe it as, 'One of the best things about our school'. During a lively act of worship led by the headteacher on Jesus as servant leader, children responded with enjoyment and reverence. Thoughtful questioning provided a stimulus for meaningful reflection and prayer. The lighting of a candle on the worship table and carefully chosen music enhanced the atmosphere for worship. Pupils are acquiring a good knowledge of Bible stories and beginning to formulate their own understanding of God as Father and Creator and Jesus as His Son. Some children are able to offer their views on the nature of the Holy Spirit. For example, older pupils explain, 'He's what's inside you all the time. The Holy Spirit encourages you.' Pupils have a good understanding that prayer can be used if you 'Want to talk to God', and to say, 'Thank you for the good things we are given'. The school environment contributes to children's spiritual development and provides opportunities for reflection with a prayer tree, an outdoor sycamore circle and the use of big questions in display, such as, 'What special gift would you give to the people you love?' Children have regular opportunities throughout the year to celebrate Christian festivals in the local church. These services are well attended and valued by parents.

They comment, 'The services at Walton Church are superb, every child is involved and they clearly like taking part.'

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

The acting headteacher has quickly established a warm atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and support based on Christian values, which is understood by all members of the school family. Parents are highly supportive of the new staff team and comment that, 'Everyone leads by example.' Governors have played a key role in understanding their school as a church school and have been proactive in planning for succession and sustainability. This is enabling the school to move forward successfully and address key priorities, whilst maintaining its Christian character and ethos. Support from the chair of governors has been much valued during this period of transition. Church school issues are incorporated into the school improvement plan and self-evaluation cycle. Issues raised in the last inspection have been fully addressed and the impact of changes has been monitored. Governors identify that one priority is to involve the whole school family in a review of the vision statement and aims so that they reflect the school's distinctive Christian ethos. Professional development has been a high priority for the staff team and whole school teamwork and collaboration is effective. The two newly qualified teachers are well supported by the school's strong partnerships with local church schools, which provide opportunities to observe outstanding practice. Similar opportunities in school enable teachers to observe worship led by different leaders. As a result, there is a developing level of shared expertise across the team, which is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. However, planning for RE and collective worship does not always provide sufficiently detailed guidance and support for staff. Pupils' involvement in the school's decision making process is exemplary. Children know that their ideas are important because they are acted upon. They take their responsibilities seriously and make very good ambassadors for the school. The partnership with the local church and family of churches is much valued. This is because it is helping to develop children's understanding of the role they can play in the local and wider community.

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