

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Arnside National Church of England School

Church Hill, Arnside, Cumbria. LA5 0DW

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Carlisle**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Date of academy conversion

01 December 2011

Date of inspection

07 December 2017

Date of last inspection

10 October 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary Academy 137686

Headteacher

Nick Sharp

Inspector's name and number

Caronne Field 866

#### School context

Arnside National is a small stand-alone Church of England primary academy. The vast majority of the 138 pupils are of White British heritage and come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. There are fewer pupils than usual with special educational needs and disabilities. The number of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is much lower than average, but includes a significant proportion of looked after children. Since the last SIAS inspection there have been significant changes of staff and governance. The headteacher has been in post since April 2017, having previously served as the acting headteacher for eighteen months.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Arnside as a Church of England school are good

- The new headteacher, ably supported by a highly committed team of staff and governors, has strengthened and developed all aspects of church school distinctiveness and effectiveness.
- Distinctive Christian values, known as star qualities, are at the heart of relationships and decision making. This creates a happy, vibrant and inclusive environment in which all children flourish.
- The rich variety of experiences in collective worship engages all members of the school family. This makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual development and wellbeing.
- Relationships with St James's Church are very strong and result in a shared Christian vision that enriches all aspects of learning and worship.

#### Areas to improve

- Engage all groups in the school community in the regular cycle of church school self-evaluation, so that their views influence and support the development of the school's Christian character.
- Provide relevant training for the development of staff and governors, in order to promote the strategic development of the school as a church school.
- Establish new partnerships with schools and communities in Britain and in other areas of the world. This is to strengthen children's understanding of cultural diversity and global issues.

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

The Christian character of this welcoming school expresses itself in caring and respectful relationships. Christian 'star qualities' are at the heart of the school. They spring from the nine Christian values described by Paul, as the 'fruit of the Spirit' in his letter to the Galatians. The way in which staff and children apply the star qualities to their own lives creates a positive climate for learning. Consequently, children learn well and attainment is high. Parents say children are very happy in this 'vibrant, warm and friendly environment'. They comment on how older children demonstrate kindness in their care for younger pupils. Pupils have a practical understanding of Christian teaching about the values and qualities that are important to the school. They link justice and fairness to the story of the Good Samaritan and explain the way in which they try to act out of concern for what is right. They respond to the question, 'What can I do to help others?' through their active support of a wide range of charities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is thoughtfully woven through RE, collective worship and the wider curriculum. It contributes well to the Christian character of the school. For instance, children learn that their life choices can affect the lives of people around world through working to become a Fairtrade school. Reflection and stillness are an important part of learning and worship. Children experience moments of awe and wonder in the area of outstanding natural beauty close to the school. Weekly School Church activities inspire and challenge pupils' thinking and attitudes. As a result, children frequently explore and reflect upon questions of meaning and purpose in their learning and worship.

Religious Education (RE) makes a positive contribution to the school's Christian character and to spiritual development. Children develop a respect for faiths and cultures different from their own. For example, a visit to the Buddhist Centre at Conishead Priory helps children to understand that not everyone shares the same religious beliefs and the importance of learning from one another. Older pupils express their concern and compassion for Christians around the world that face persecution. However, wider partnerships with other schools and faith communities are not sufficiently developed to ensure that children have a secure understanding of other cultures.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is inspirational, engaging and inclusive. Children demonstrate a high level of involvement and enjoyment. This is because they experience an exciting variety of activities during worship, including prayer, music, storytelling and time to be still and reflect. The vicar provides exceptionally strong spiritual and pastoral support for the school. Planning is highly effective because staff and clergy plan and review together. Worship leaders ensure that themes are rooted in Christian teaching and everyday life. For instance, children learn how Christians around the world have been inspired to action in the service of others. They explain how the Christian star qualities can influence the way in which a person chooses to live their life, saying 'we can all make the world a better place'.

Worship in different settings, including key stage worship with children of a similar age, means that children are confident about sharing their ideas. Pupil worship teams of all ages regularly lead whole school and key stage worship. They plan together and increasingly take responsibility for decisions about how to make worship better. This develops their understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian worship as well as their leadership skills. One outstanding feature of worship is the weekly School Church service. It provides a rich experience of worship that brings together the school, church and local community. This makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual growth and wellbeing of the whole community. Children also develop a growing understanding of Anglican traditions and different styles of Christian worship. Family and friends all say they feel very welcome at these services.

Experiences such as Holy Trinity day help children to understand the Trinitarian nature of God. They explore the meaning of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through symbolism in art and creative activities. Children understand the value of prayer because of the different experiences of prayer they encounter in worship and in the wider life of the school. Highly effective use is made of reflective areas and prayer spaces in school and church to support worship. They support children's understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer and their personal understanding of God.

Staff, children and governors provide insightful feedback that informs the development of future worship plans. All comments are analysed by the worship coordinator and this leads to recognisable improvements in worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

RE has a high profile across the school. Children enjoy RE, saying it is their favourite subject. This is because the school's enquiry-based approach allows children to explore themes through big questions which encourage independent thinking and enquiry. The curriculum enables pupils to learn about and learn from Christianity and other major world religions. Christian values and qualities are incorporated well into RE lessons. In a reception and Year 1 class, children explored Luke's account of the birth of Jesus through wooden nativity figures and role play. Sensitive questioning encouraged children to 'wonder' how each character might feel. As a result, even the very youngest children could explain that Jesus was a very special baby sent from God. Some children explained how this story shows God's love. Children also respect and learn from other faith traditions. For instance, a parent visited school to share her own faith as a Muslim with class groups.

RE is well led and managed by the new subject leader. Her work means that there is a clear vision for RE and effective strategies to secure improvement. An audit of provision with staff and governors resulted in the decision to implement a new scheme of work across the school. This ensures units of work build on one another so that the curriculum overall is a coherent journey. Attainment and progress in RE is good and is in line with other core subjects. Pupils' work and high quality classroom displays reflect their progress in skills and the depth of their personal responses. Teachers give insightful feedback in books and lessons. This often encourages further reflection and helps children to understand next steps in learning. For example, in a piece of work on justice, pupils were encouraged to reflect upon how Jesus might respond. Assessment and tracking systems across the school are secure. They support planning, teaching and learning. This effectively addresses a focus for development from previous SIAS inspections. The school have begun to formalise systems for governor monitoring and evaluation. The vicar, who is the governor with responsibility for RE, works closely with the subject leader to monitor standards. This self-evaluation identifies areas of strength and provides actions to ensure the continued development of RE.

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

Leaders and governors work with common purpose and commitment. Although many are new to role, the impact of their shared vision is transforming the Christian character of the school. All members of the community recognise this. They understand that the Christian star qualities refer to the fruit of the Spirit and see this being lived out amongst the school family. Parents speak very highly of the headteacher and his staff team, praising the warmth of welcome, openness and concern for every child. The Christian vision impacts on both pupils' progress and wellbeing. For example, it influenced the decision to provide wrap-around care in school. This means all families are able to access care beyond the school day in a secure and nurturing environment.

Governors ensure that church school issues are prioritised in school improvement planning. As a result, the school's responses to the focus for development in the previous SIAS inspection have contributed to school improvement. The academy trustees secure the school's Christian foundation. Governors ensure that all policy and decision-making reflect the school's Christian vision and values. They act as critical friends and know that their views are valued. The introduction of a more robust system for governor monitoring and evaluation is securing school improvement. Leaders and governors identify that they now need to find ways to engage all members of the school community in the process of self-evaluation of the school as a church school. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. They are well led and have a high priority within the school.

Support and training from the diocese and good links with local schools have enabled staff and governors to develop many aspects of their practice as a church school. However, there are few opportunities for staff and governors to develop their leadership practice through wider professional networks and training programmes.

Church and school work together seamlessly. This has been instrumental in helping the school to develop its distinctive Christian vision and values. Children take their responsibilities seriously and are proud of their charitable work. They know that their actions make a difference to the lives of others in the school, church and wider community.

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