

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Calow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

North Road, Calow, Chesterfield, S44 5BD

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Diocese

Derby

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local authority

Derbyshire

Date/s of inspection

9 March 2017

Date of last inspection

22 March 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary 112876

Headteacher

Martin Thacker

Inspector's name and number

John Horwood 177

School context

Calow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is an average size primary school situated on the outskirts of Chesterfield. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are below average. The current headteacher has been in post for 12 years and does not have a timetabled teaching commitment. The parish church is about a 10-minute walk from the school. The school is part of the Hasland cluster of schools and has applied to join the Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (DDAT).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Calow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong faith and commitment of the headteacher to the vision of developing a Christian school that nurtures all learners have enabled him to successfully promote Christian values that underpin every aspect of its work and provide a secure foundation for pupils' lives.
- An outstanding learning environment has been created by the school community, including staff and governors, based on care and love. This is supporting the development of the well-being and academic achievement of every pupil.
- The school's strong focus on both Christian and British values is a major factor in pupils' outstanding understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters.
- The strong partnership of the school with the local church community supports pupils' understanding of the Christian values of faith, hope and love whilst providing them with a range of opportunities for collective worship.

Areas to improve

- Embed the strategies, which are rooted in Christian values, to improve pupils' academic progress. These are already having an impact on the achievement of the current pupils.

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

The Christian values of love and care are fundamental to the life of the school. Parents comment on the excellent way these are promoted by the headteacher who is always readily available to talk to them if they have any concerns, although they do not often have any. Many say that they chose the school because it is a church school. A growing number of families travel from outside the catchment area because they want their children to come to this church school. One parent, who initially had made the school their second choice, explained that during the first term they were offered a place for their child at their original first choice but did not even consider it because of how good they had found the ethos in Calow. Parents and pupils all arrive at the school gate to be welcomed by the headteacher and parents said they were amazed at how he quickly learns every child's name and understands their needs. They immediately recognise the caring and loving ethos that pervades the school. Pupils confidently talk about the Christian character and values in the school and how they have learnt to be respectful and support others if needed. They identify how the crosses and opportunities for prayer around the school support the Christian character of the school. The impressive way that pupils describe Christian artefacts shows how well they understand their meaning. For example, they confidently explain how a cross becomes a crucifix if it has an image of Jesus on it. The promotion of love and care is evident throughout the school and leads to excellent relationships and support. This also results in their regular attendance at school. Whilst a few pupils have behavioural difficulties they receive support to overcome them; on occasions they will receive sanctions if it is necessary. Staff identify that they all feel valued and they love being at the school. They appreciate the excellent relationships that exist throughout the school and recognise this is due to the school's values that are promoted so well. They know that pupils respect adults who in turn respect them. The outstanding behaviour of pupils results in an excellent learning environment where every pupil is able to make good progress and be well-prepared for moving to the next stage of their education. Whilst pupils' outcomes dipped during recent years this was due to weak teaching in one year group. This has now been overcome and, whilst still not fully effective, the sensitive and determined approach is already showing a positive impact for the vast majority of pupils. Religious education (RE) is given a high priority in the school and is seen as important by staff and pupils. Pupils find lessons both enjoyable and challenging. RE lessons also provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of thinking and enquiring which are already greater than expected for their age. The visits to the local church supplement the many opportunities they have to develop their understanding of Christian traditions through the RE curriculum and collective worship. Christian values provide strong support to pupils in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. School leaders are aware of the limited diversity within the school and are overcoming this through partnerships with other schools and visits to other places of worship. Pupils are excited at having met both Bishops who work in Derby Diocese. They also develop this understanding through the appointment of a 'boy bishop' in the school each year. This brings the church 'to life' in their eyes. Their ability to think deeply resulted in pupils wanting a 'girl Bishop' each year and, in-line with Anglican practice, this has been enabled. Pupils are aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith through the curriculum and a good range of visitors to the school and places pupils visit.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is well-planned and the breadth of styles and the impact is monitored by leaders and governors. This monitoring is used to inform future planning and ensure that pupils' spiritual development is supported as much as possible. All pupils and staff, regardless of their faith, attend collective worship. Staff identified that they benefit from collective worship through seeing its impact on the pupils and how the Bible stories are regular features of worship which they can explore further in lessons and link them to the life of Jesus. Pupils enjoy joining in the singing which they do enthusiastically and with expression. They are given good opportunities to join in with the main worship theme and they do this enthusiastically and sensibly. Their behaviour during collective worship is outstanding and this contributes to the impact of the worship. Pupils have only limited opportunities to lead or plan their own worship. However, leaders have carefully considered this option including visiting schools which encourage this. They decided that, at this time, it would not work effectively for their pupils. Staff set very good role models for pupils and provide them with support and the promotion of Christian values during collective worship. The involvement of pupils and other stakeholders in collective worship is embedded into school life. Every pupil knows that they can join in with worship and that prayer is an important part of their own spiritual journey. They confidently talk about past acts of collective worship and how they related to their every-day life. Pupils proudly show how the Lord's prayer and the school prayer are given a high profile around the school. They talk confidently about the local church where they go for the main Christian festivals and they have developed a close relationship with the Rector who is a regular visitor. These links give them a greater understanding of the Christian faith. Pupils are confident to discuss how they sometimes write their own prayers. They demonstrate an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit far greater than expected for their age. This is helped by the Trinity being explained in ways they can understand. The terms 'assembly' and 'collective worship' are clearly understood by pupils who know that prayer takes place within worship whilst day-to-day matters are discussed in assembly. Pupils are given

excellent opportunities to reflect on concerns and problems around the world, to pray for people in those areas and to raise money for charities. The foundation governors monitor the impact of collective worship and sometimes attend collective worship. Parents see collective worship as an integral part of the school day and they welcome the involvement they have in church services. They say that their children often describe what they have done in collective worship and this helps parents understand their children's spiritual journey.

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

The headteacher has a strong faith and provides excellent leadership for this church school. Staff and governors provide full support for his vision, which is rooted in Christian values, and are excellent role models for pupils. The school has taken effective action to address the single focus for development identified at the last inspection. More opportunities for spiritual development have been provided in the outside learning environment. This includes a water feature being installed to aid reflection. This area has been developed as a memorial garden for a member of staff who died and is respected by all pupils. Through their excellent relationships with pupils, staff promote the values of care and compassion to develop a love of learning and confidence to live a happy and fulfilling life. Leaders have ensured that Christian values are given high priority and in every classroom and around the school they are displayed as 'keys to life'. During the inspection, the inspector asked some Year 6 pupils a very challenging question relating to their academic achievement – 'How do Christian values help you with your mathematics?' After a short pause, one pupil explained that it is about resilience and confidence which makes them try harder. Others then rapidly joined in with a range of views which demonstrated a secure understanding of the values within the school and the way in which they help them including when answering questions in examinations. The whole school community acknowledges that the impact of the school's Christian character is exemplified in both pupils' academic achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders and governors recognised how some weaker teaching led to a dip in pupils' achievement two years ago. With the support of the local authority, they addressed the issues and have now eliminated inadequate teaching. Leaders implemented the NAHT Aspire programme to assist with rapid improvement and the impact of this is beginning to show. The school's data show that the vast majority of pupils are now making good progress although for some groups, whilst showing improvement, there has been insufficient time for progress to become good. Although not all learners are yet making as much progress as they might, the school's distinctiveness is fully developed and self-evaluation strategies are in place with the impact becoming evident. Governors confirm that being a church school is fundamental to their vision and to school improvement. This is reflected in their approach to appointing new staff and the induction pack prepared for new staff. School records confirm that the progress of the school as a church school is monitored regularly by the governing body. Staff and governors identify the strong links between collective worship themes and the RE themes. The headteacher takes the views of all stakeholders into consideration when preparing the self-evaluation documents. Importance of staff development is recognised by the recent 'Investors in People' award review. This recognises that leaders know the school well, understands its future leadership needs and plans to meet them. The very strong partnership with the Rector and the church community provides ongoing support for the Christian character of the school. Parents are seen as an integral part of the school and they know and trust both the school and Rector. They strongly view the school as a place that provides a good education for their children within a safe and caring environment. They recognise the many Christian values promoted in the school and especially how staff have developed the values of love and care in their children. There are good links to the diocese which, for example, provides training to support the RE provision in the school.

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