

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Blackford Church of England VA Primary School	
Address	Blackford, CA6 4ES
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	
Overall grade	Good
The impact of collective worship	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Good

School's vision
<p>Everyone is encouraged to grow in body, mind and spirit as part of our caring Christian community and we celebrate the uniqueness of each individual. We promote equality and diversity through our shared Christian values of compassion, forgiveness and trust and inspire a life-long love of learning.</p> <p>'Be kind and loving to each other. Forgive each other the same as God forgave you in Christ.' Ephesians 4:32</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Christian vision champions an understanding that all pupils are unique and special to God. Pupils flourish as support is carefully tailored to meet their individual needs. • Moments to pray, reflect and respond to deep questioning are woven across the school day. Although a shared approach to spirituality is in place, systematic planning for spiritual development across the breadth of the curriculum is not fully established. • Pupils are actively involved in supporting local charities and social action projects. Evidence of pupils challenging injustice and inequality in response to national and global issues is emerging. • Collective worship is at the heart of this small Church school family. It is fully inclusive, enriches pupils' lives and supports their spiritual development. • The new religious education (RE) curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of Christianity and their spiritual and character development. However, pupils' knowledge of a range of religions and worldviews is less developed.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen an understanding of difference and diversity by broadening pupils' knowledge of a range of religions and worldviews. • Plan for a range of rich spiritual experiences across the breadth of the curriculum to maximise the impact of the school's shared approach to spirituality. • Further develop pupils' understanding of national and global issues so that they are empowered to act as courageous advocates, challenging injustice and inequality.

Inspection findings

Every pupil is cherished as a unique individual in this small, nurturing Church school. Teachers know their pupils well and this ensures that a personalised approach to learning leads to flourishing.

A deeply rooted ethos of compassion and forgiveness is testament to the school's Christian vision in action. The biblical quote from Ephesians 4:32 is embraced and lived out by every member of this close-knit community. The long-serving headteacher is a model of Christian leadership. She has driven forward a culture which ensures that the Christian vision is at the heart of all decision making. Aply supported by a team of dedicated colleagues, there is a shared determination to pursue the best and broadest outcomes for all pupils. A core team of governors is actively involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the school as a Church school. This places an emphasis on listening to and acting upon the views of stakeholders. The headteacher is soon to retire. Governors are actively seeking a successor who can sustain the school's firmly rooted Christian vision.

A mutually beneficial relationship with the neighbouring church has been rekindled. This is enriching the spiritual development of staff, pupils and their families. The vicar has become a much loved and valued member of the school community. Links to the Northern Inter-Schools Christian Union (NISCOU), the diocese and Carlisle Cathedral have helped to sustain the school's Christian distinctiveness.

A powerful expression of the Christian vision is the support provided to the school's most vulnerable pupils. Staff recognise that pupils develop at different rates and require patient nurturing to grow and develop. Accordingly, the curriculum is sensitively adapted to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. New pupils joining the school family are warmly welcomed and have their needs quickly met. Great efforts are made to overcome barriers to learning so all have the freedom to learn, grow and flourish. An emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) has been appointed. This has enabled the school to offer a wider range of intervention to meet pupils' needs. For example, the ELSA leads a small group which focusses on building aspirations and improving social skills. The impact on pupils' self-esteem is tangible and has paved the way to new friendships.

Inspired by the Christian vision, leaders aim to create a holistic curriculum that feeds body, mind and spirit. A shared understanding of spiritual development based on the Windows, Mirrors, Doors approach is in place. This has led to moments to pray, reflect and respond to questioning often prompted by activities in the learning environment. Currently, spiritual experiences happen more incidentally in lessons rather than being explicitly mapped out across the breadth of the curriculum.

Leaders are shaping the curriculum to reflect the school's Christian vision. This has led the school to work towards the Global Neighbours accreditation. An understanding of equality, diversity and global issues is being woven within the teaching of different curriculum subjects. For example, in English pupils have recently read a poem about inspirational people in Black history. These curriculum experiences are impacting positively on pupils' spiritual and character development. However, pupils are at an early stage of using their knowledge to challenge injustice as courageous advocates for change.

This small Church school is the cornerstone of its rural community. The growing compassion of pupils is actively expressed in their support for local charities and social action projects. For example, they recently undertook a reindeer run to raise money for the local children's hospice.




All members of this small Church school live well together. Pupils' good behaviour is testament to their understanding of Christian compassion, forgiveness and trust. Behaviour problems are rare. When they do occur, relationships heal as pupils are guided through an active process of reflection, forgiveness and reconciliation. Leaders are currently ensuring that this active approach is outlined explicitly in the behaviour policy. When pupils or staff members experience personal difficulties, this warm Church school family quickly envelops them with love and care. As one member of staff commented, 'We're a family, not a staff.' The lead professional has attended training on how to identify and support a range of mental health issues.

Pupils enjoy RE and it has a high profile in the school. A new curriculum was introduced at the start of the academic year and staff training is ongoing. The curriculum is clearly ordered and sequenced to provide a deep understanding of Christianity as a diverse, living, world faith. Lesson by lesson, engaging activities support pupils' spiritual and character development. Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of biblical texts and can explain how Christianity has inspired the lives of believers across the globe. They regularly reflect on their own beliefs and values. The recent move to a two-year curriculum cycle has enabled teaching to be closely matched to age related expectations. Pupils are building knowledge about the main world religions however their understanding is less developed. This is why it is an area for development. The newly introduced assessment system is fit for purpose. It enables teachers to track pupils' knowledge and understanding to inform future teaching. Subject leaders are experienced in monitoring procedures. Immediate plans are in place to undertake a full evaluation of the impact of the new curriculum on the breadth of pupil flourishing.

Collective worship unites this small Church school and sustains its Christian vision and values. A pupil noted, 'Worship helps us to show compassion to each other on the playground.' All gain from worship as it is interactive, inclusive and invitational in nature. The very youngest pupils also benefit from child-friendly worship that is well matched to their developmental stage. Worship follows a varied pattern each week and spiritual growth is promoted daily through stillness, reflection and prayer. Pupils have an active role in planning and leading worship which builds ownership and strengthens their spiritual and character development. For example, on a rota basis, pupils lead prayers and reflections to open and close worship. Once a fortnight, the oldest pupils take turns to fully plan and lead an act of worship independently of adults. The local vicar and NISCU are valued, regular contributors to worship. The growing relationship with St John the Baptist Church has led to a monthly family service which is well attended. A system of monitoring and evaluation which includes pupils, staff and governors ensures that collective worship supports flourishing for all.

The Christian vision is effectively lived out in the daily life of this small school. Staff see every pupil as a gift, uniquely designed and individually made by God. Flourishing happens because no pupil goes unnoticed. All are sensitively nurtured and supported to grow as rounded individuals and achieve their God-given potential.



	The effectiveness of RE is		Good	
	<p>The new curriculum is rich and engaging. Pupils make significant progress in their knowledge of Christianity as plans are detailed and progressively sequenced. Pupils gain knowledge about a range of religions however planning is not as comprehensive. This means that pupils' understanding is less developed. Leaders judge the quality of teaching and learning to be good overall. This judgement was verified during the inspection and informed by monitoring. As the curriculum has only recently been introduced, evaluations of its full impact on pupil flourishing are taking place.</p>			
Information				
School	Blackford Church of England VA Primary School	Inspection date	19 January 2023	
URN	112300	VC/VA/Academy	Voluntary aided	
Diocese/District	Carlisle	Pupils on roll	46	
Headteacher	Linda Smith			
Chair of Governors	Dorothea MacKay			
Inspector	Alison Lloyd	No.	2141	