



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Blackford Church of England Primary School

Blackford,  
Carlisle,  
Cumbria  
CA6 4ES



Diocese of Carlisle  
Growing Disciples

<b>Previous SIAMS grade:</b>	Satisfactory
<b>Current inspection grade:</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese:</b>	<b>Carlisle</b>
Local authority:	Cumbria
Date of inspection:	23 April 2015
Date of last inspection:	18 October 2010
School's unique reference number:	112300
Headteacher:	Linda W. Smith
Inspector's name and number:	Anne B. Woodcock 445

#### School context

Blackford is a small rural school on the outskirts of Carlisle, close to the Scottish border. All 55 pupils are of white British heritage and come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. 25% of pupils attract the Pupil Premium grant. Recent building and renovations have provided a new classroom and outdoor learning area for Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils and additional teaching areas for older pupils.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blackford Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The effective leadership of the headteacher, supported by governors and staff, has developed the school's Christian character and inspired all aspects of school improvement.
- Strong, nurturing relationships based on the shared understanding of the school's core Christian values, support all members of the school family.
- Collective worship, supported by the links with the church, has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual development and understanding.
- Pupils' good behaviour reflects their understanding of Christian trust, compassion and forgiveness.

#### Areas to improve

- Extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diverse nature of Christianity and major world faiths so that they have a better understanding of the similarities and differences between cultures.
- Engage parents and the local community in the church school self-evaluation process so that governors have a better understanding of how the school can improve.

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

The school's core Christian values have a strong impact on children's behaviour and attitudes. One Year 5 pupil explained, 'Jesus taught the disciples values like trust and forgiveness to help them be better people. We try to follow them to be better people too.' Relationships are strong and nurturing. The school's belief that each person is special to God is reflected in its inclusive nature. It is a close and caring Christian community in which staff come to know their pupils very well. They ensure that individual needs are consistently met. As a result, pupils' well-being and personal development is good. Parents recognise this, saying that teachers tailor the curriculum to their children's needs because they know 'how each child works.' Good teaching promotes active learning. Children enjoy their lessons. They are confident and eager learners. Robust assessment and intervention strategies ensure that they make good progress from their starting points and standards of attainment are good. One Year 5 child explained, 'Our teachers make lessons fun so you learn more than you think!' Pupils are increasingly reflective. For example, one young child explained how she uses the 'peace hut' to be still and quiet. They have frequent opportunities to explore the natural world. Year 6 children regularly share a forestry school experience with another local church school. Displays show how children express their ideas through art and music. They respond well, demonstrating good spiritual development. However, more regular and extended curricular opportunities will result in pupils' spiritual development becoming outstanding. Children have some knowledge of world issues such as poverty and injustice and they realise that they can help in a small way. 'Jesus helped people with leprosy and other diseases,' explained a Year 6 pupil, 'so we help others by raising money for charities like Children in Need.'

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

Children enjoy and value daily collective worship. Older children explain, 'We learn about what Jesus taught and how to live your life as a better person.' Collective worship clearly influences the way in which children behave and think. 'Jesus told everyone about his values. Our values help us to think about what Jesus taught,' stated a Year 6 child. Parents say that their children often talk about Bible stories at home and explain how they share their values. Worship is well planned and firmly based on Bible teaching and Christian values. Children have a good knowledge of the life and person of Jesus and the nature of God. A Year 5 pupil explained, 'God is the heavenly Father to everyone, loving and caring for those who believe and those who don't.' Worship is a joyful and participatory experience for most pupils. They enjoy acting out stories and respond well to questions because they are given time to talk and develop their ideas. Older children now regularly plan and deliver worship, demonstrating their understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian worship. Time is given for prayer and reflection. Children know some traditional prayers and are becoming more confident at writing their own. Church links support worship. The vicar is a regular visitor, leading worship and supporting traditional Anglican practices, such as the use of liturgical colours for different parts of the church year. Children value his visits, recalling the 'washing of feet' as something special. The church is used for special festival services which are attended by parents and members of the local community. Worship takes place in a variety of settings, giving children experience of different styles of worship. It is monitored and evaluated effectively by staff, pupils and governors. As a result, the impact of collective worship continues to improve.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education (RE) is good**

Children enjoy and are challenged by their work in RE. Lessons are well-planned and differentiated so that all children can make a contribution and make progress. The enquiry based approach motivates children and provides frequent opportunities to discuss ideas and develop skills. During an introductory lesson in Buddhism, the youngest children asked pertinent questions and made clear links with their prior knowledge. 'So Siddhartha had disciples just like Jesus and he helped people and wanted them to be happy too,' commented a

Year 1 child. A good balance is achieved between learning about and learning from religion, so RE has a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children demonstrate a good knowledge of the Bible and key aspects of Christianity. In one lesson, whilst discussing the meaning of a parable, children used their knowledge of other stories to further illustrate their responses. They are aware of the need to learn about other cultures and beliefs. One Year 6 child explained, 'You need to know about what others believe and to respect their ways.' Nevertheless, at present, children's knowledge and understanding of key elements of the religions studied, together with the multi-cultural aspects of Christianity, is not secure. RE is well-led and it has a high priority within school. Significant advances have been made since the last inspection which have resulted in higher standards and improved rates of progress. Standards are in line with other core subjects. Pupil work books, displays and portfolios reflect the high quality of work achieved in lessons. Effective assessment procedures inform planning and identify gaps in learning.

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

The headteacher has secured the highly visible Christian character of the school, ensuring that the agreed core values influence all areas of school development. She inspires staff to improve teaching and learning, which has resulted in improving standards of achievement and rates of pupil progress. Governors have a clear understanding of their role. They support and challenge the work of the school, ensuring that church school issues are prioritised within whole school improvement planning. Systems are in place to review the school as a church school. However, at present these do not involve parents or members of the church community. All issues from the previous inspection have been addressed, resulting in significant improvements in the Christian character of the school. Governors monitor and evaluate RE and collective worship effectively. They observe lessons and worship, share in book scrutinies and meet with children and staff. Workshops run by staff are much appreciated because they provide insight into how governors can further support the work of the school. RE and collective worship are well-led and contribute significantly to the school's Christian character and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Links with the church and local community are strong. The school provides a meeting space for community activities and church organisations use the school frequently. Partnerships with other local church schools support teaching, learning and curriculum development. Diocesan support has been effective in developing the Christian character of the school, supporting governors and improving the impact of collective worship. Pupils know that their views are valued and they relish all opportunities to share in decision-making. They show care and concern for each other and for those less fortunate than themselves. The link with a school in Malawi supports their understanding of global issues.

SIAMS report April 2015 Blackford Church of England Primary School, Carlisle, Cumbria CA6 4ES