

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

### Pennington Church of England Primary School

Pennington, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0RR

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Carlisle**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Cumbria

Date of inspection

23 November 2017

Date of last inspection

14 November 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Controlled 112284

Headteacher

Helen Storey

Inspector's name and number

Jo Williams 863

#### School context

Pennington Church of England Primary school is a small, rural school close to the market town of Ulverston. The majority of pupils come from the nearby villages and are predominantly White British. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below the national average. The number of pupils receiving support for special educational needs is comparable to the national average. The school has faced many changes of staff and governors since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in 2017. The local parish is without a clergyman.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Pennington C of E School as a Church of England school are good

- Christian values permeate the life of the school and have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the whole school community.
- Collective worship is an important part of school life. It is regularly led by pupils and this contributes to their understanding of its purpose.
- Strong partnerships with the local church and community make a positive contribution to pupils' social and spiritual development.
- Effective leadership from the recently appointed headteacher is resulting in the school making rapid progress in the development of its Christian character.

#### Areas to improve

- To develop and share the school's Christian vision so that the whole school community has a greater understanding of the school's character and purpose.
- To develop understanding of diversity within Christianity and between different faith communities in order to prepare pupils as global citizens.
- To develop pupils' understanding of prayer through a range of activities, including the development of reflection areas, in order to enhance their spiritual development.

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

The school's Christian character is deeply rooted in its core Christian values, such as koinonia, friendship and trust. The value of Christian fellowship (koinonia) is developed through the school's regular 'family days'. Pupils work across classes exploring different themes, including Christian values. As a result, they gain a good understanding of the importance of Christian values. Pupils are effectively supported in their wellbeing and personal development. The caring school community supports individual pupils effectively in their times of need. The Christian ethos has a positive impact on academic standards, regardless of a pupil's starting point. This is evident in staff's high expectations for pupils' personal achievements. The Christian character of the school has a significant influence on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to ask 'big questions' from an early age. A Year 1 pupil reflected, 'Why did God make himself?' He began to think about the awe and magnitude of God, concluding that it was in order for everyone else to be born. Effective relationships are a strength within the school. Parents are keen to highlight the benefits of the school's buddy system. They speak of the positive effect it has on their child's journey through school. The school's Christian character supports pupils' respect for others. One pupil commented that, 'It doesn't matter if others' opinions are different to yours, you still treat them like your friend'. Pupils demonstrate a developing knowledge of diverse communities, such as the local Buddhist community in Ulverston. However, they are unable to explain examples of diversity within the Christian faith. Religious education (RE) has a prominent place in the school curriculum. Pupils enjoy RE and its impact is evident beyond the classroom. It supports the school's Christian ethos, by helping them to understand biblical teaching about Christian values.

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

Collective worship is an important part of the school day and has a positive impact on the whole school community. It is rooted in Christian values and biblical teaching. Collective worship has a clear structure, ensuring that all worship includes key Christian elements such as prayer and a Bible reading linked to a theme. This supports pupils in planning worship effectively. For example, pupils led worship on honesty. They used a relevant Bible verse from Proverbs, 'When you tell the truth, justice is done, but lies lead to injustice.' Pupils say that collective worship helps them gain a deeper understanding of their core values. Every worship enriches pupils' spiritual development through times of quiet reflection. Prayer during collective worship is highly valued by the school community. Pupils cherish the time they have 'talking to God'. Parents sometimes share in writing prayers and reflecting on Christian values with their children. There are some opportunities for quiet prayers during the school day. However, there are few occasions for pupils to engage with private prayer and reflection. Pupils have a basic grasp of Christian traditions such as the Lord's Prayer and display some knowledge of the Christian calendar. However, they have a limited understanding of diversity within Christianity. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the person of Jesus Christ and of God the Father, although they are not able to explain what is meant by the Holy Trinity. There has been a significant improvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of worship since the last inspection. This is particularly evident in pupils' leadership of worship. This is now commonplace and undertaken with thoughtfulness and confidence. Pupils evaluate worship effectively. The consistently high quality of worship is ensured by detailed plans and evaluations. In response to the previous inspection, governors have also monitored collective worship, making a helpful contribution to effective evaluation. Evaluation informs planning and results in worship being adapted to be more relevant to pupils. For example, pupils highlighted that they particularly enjoyed visitors in worship, with the result that 'Open the Book' and 'Jesters for Jesus' are now regular visitors to school. They also said that they enjoyed being more active in worship led by adults. Consequently, staff now include more role play activities in worship.

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

The new headteacher has made good progress in developing the school's Christian vision. This is rooted in Christian values. Since the last inspection the school has spent time reflecting on its vision. As a result, the whole school community has started to take ownership of its existing Christian values and those which have been added, such as honesty. The vision is expressed in the school's aspirations for the 'Pennington Child'. It states that each individual is 'able to grow and flourish ... in the love and faithfulness of God'. The staff explain how this is lived out on a daily basis. They outline the significance of the school's Christian approach for the pupils; it makes them want to be the 'best versions of themselves'. Parents give many instances of the Christian values being lived out both in school and at home. For example, whilst having dinner on holiday, a girl left the table and gave her dessert to a homeless lady sitting on the pavement nearby. The Christian vision supports the school's academic standards and

contributes to pupils' wellbeing. However, the process of sharing this new vision is still at an early stage. It is not yet fully embedded in the daily life of the school or documentation shared with parents. In response to the previous inspection report, the new governing body is undertaking effective monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, staff and governors know their school well. This results in rigorous strategic planning for sustained school improvement. The school is committed to growing future church school leaders. The school nurtured the current headteacher and her deputy who were promoted internally. Both RE and collective worship are well-led and managed. They are important in the life of the school and meet statutory requirements. The school enjoys a variety of purposeful partnerships. Although the parish is currently without a vicar, members of the congregation maintain a strong relationship with the school and visit regularly. They observe that 'the school knows we're walking alongside them'. There are mutually beneficial partnerships with a local old people's home and a farm. Other community links are successfully cultivated and maintained by the school, making a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.

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