



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Leven Valley Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

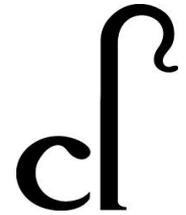
Backbarrow,  
Ulverston,  
Cumbria.  
LA12 8QF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Carlisle**

Local authority: Cumbria  
Date of inspection: 26 November 2015  
Date of last inspection: 13 July 2011  
School's unique reference number: 112356  
Headteacher: Ian Nicol  
Inspector's name and number: Anne B. Woodcock 445



Diocese of Carlisle  
Growing Disciples

#### School context

The school serves a wide catchment area near Ulverston in South Cumbria. Many of the 65 pupils travel from isolated hamlets and villages. They are taught in three mixed-age classes. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and they come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. A significant proportion of pupils attract the pupil premium grant. The school supports a lower than average number of children with additional needs. The school benefits from a stable, experienced staff team.

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

- Pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to life and learning are based on their understanding of Christian values.
- Strong, nurturing relationships, based on Christian trust, love and hope, support pupils and their families very well.
- The highly effective Christian leadership of the headteacher inspires and drives all aspects of school improvement.
- Purposeful links with local churches contribute significantly to the school's Christian distinctiveness and to pupils' spiritual growth.

#### Areas to improve

- Engage pupils in creating and using a wider range of prayers for private and public use, to support their spiritual journey.
- Record pupil's progress and achievement in RE so that gaps in learning can be more easily identified to further improve standards of attainment.

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

The school's Christian character is immediately apparent to visitors. It is reflected in the calm, nurturing relationships which support all members of the school family. 'Our children are truly treasured,' described one parent. Christian values impact strongly on all aspects of school life. Behaviour is excellent because children are eager to show friendship and trust. 'Friendship is the best part of this school,' explained one Year 4 child, 'you are never left out. We help each other.' Children are highly motivated and eager to learn. Attendance is high, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of learning and perseverance. The school's commitment to being a distinctively Christian and inclusive school is expressed in their motto, 'Everyone on board for the learning adventure'. All pupils are very well-supported. Standards of attainment are consistently good and pupils make good, sometimes rapid, progress from their starting points. One older child explained that they achieve well because, 'Teachers boost our confidence and encourage us to improve all the time.' Pupils' personal development and well-being is nurtured very effectively. Many are confident, articulate thinkers who are eager to accept responsibility and share their talents with others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is extremely good. Regular outdoor learning and visits support pupils' appreciation and understanding of the world around them. They express their thoughts through art and poetry. Displays reflect the depth of their understanding. For example, when reflecting on forgiveness, one pupil wrote, 'God created humans who were meant to be forgiving and share, but sadly they don't.' The determination to ensure that pupils gain experience of diversity, through religious education (RE) and cross-curricular themes, impacts strongly on their understanding of issues such as intolerance and injustice. Pupils explain that they support charities such as Manna House, because they want to help those less fortunate and share as Jesus taught.

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

Collective worship is inclusive and engaging. Children enjoy worship because they participate frequently. A Year 6 pupil explained, 'I'm not a God-fearing person but I still like being part of the worship.' Worship is well-planned. Themes are based on Christian values, festivals and Bible teaching. As a result, children have a good knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus and they try to use Christian values in their own lives. 'We forgive each other because God forgives us,' said a Key Stage 1 pupil. Children have developing ideas about God, describing him as being 'like a father, a friend who guides us'. Strong, purposeful links with the local church contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual growth. The vicar supports planning and delivers worship each week in school. The church supports regular 'Everyone Together' afternoons, such as the recent Advent event. The vicar has introduced aspects of traditional Anglican practice, such as the use of liturgical colours. Children regularly plan and lead special festival services, some of which are held in church. Parents and members of the church are invited and attend in considerable numbers because they value the opportunity to share in their children's worship. Older children take responsibility for aspects of worship regularly, acting as worship leaders. They prepare the focus table and choose songs and read prayers. Prayer and reflection are important features of daily worship. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer and are increasingly willing to offer their own prayers during worship. Children write prayers to God, asking for help and saying thank you, such as those written for harvest. However, pupils need to extend the way in which they write different types of prayer. The school is planning to use their ideas as a resource for worship. Collective worship is effectively monitored and evaluated by governors and staff. Daily records and feedback from children inform planning and lead to improvements, such as the recent introduction of worship leaders.

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

Children have positive attitudes to RE because they enjoy their learning experiences. 'We're

given time to say what we actually think and discuss important issues,' explained a Year 6 child. Lessons are well-planned using creative approaches which meet the needs of all learners within the mixed-age classes. Enquiry based approaches excite pupils, encouraging them to apply skills and make connections between learning about and learning from religion. Pupils make good progress from their starting points, attaining standards very similar to those achieved in other core subjects. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of Christian values and to their SMSC development. 'Jesus set out his stories as examples for people to follow,' explained a Year 5 child. Pupils have a developing knowledge of the Bible and other holy books. They recognise that Christians worship in different ways and have experience of visiting a variety of local places of worship. Through the study of major world faiths, pupils gain awareness of diverse cultures and beliefs. Visits to Hindu and Buddhist Temples and a mosque provide children with first-hand experience of the ways in which people worship and live their lives. Older children are able to identify similarities and differences between faiths. They are tolerant and respectful. Pupils understand what they need to do to improve because procedures for self-assessment and peer marking are well-established. The RE subject leader, who teaches RE across the school, has a clear idea of the standards reached, using ongoing assessment to inform planning. However, there is limited recording of overall pupil progress and achievement, so gaps in learning are not easily identified.

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

The distinctly Christian leadership of the headteacher inspires and drives all that is achieved in the school. He is ably supported by a stable and experienced staff who share and model the school's agreed Christian values. Relationships across the school are extremely strong and supportive. Governors have a clear understanding of their role. They support and challenge the work of the school, monitoring and evaluating RE and collective worship effectively through shared observations and discussions. Feedback informs the school's self-evaluation processes. They also engage parents, staff and pupils. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed and the impact of changes has been evaluated. The role of link governors has been strengthened and their involvement in church school development is therefore greater. Church school issues are prioritised within whole school improvement planning. The leadership of RE and collective worship is secure and well-supported. Partnership with the Cartmel Cluster of church schools is extremely effective. It supports governor training, leadership and teaching. Succession planning is secure. This is exemplified in the way in which the headteacher acted as an executive headteacher for a neighbouring church school, his absence being covered by an experienced teacher. Partnership with the diocese and other local groups is utilised well to support leadership and staff training. Strong links with the local village churches make a significant contribution to the school's Christian character. Parents are highly supportive of the school because they are confident that the individual needs of their children are being met within a distinctly Christian environment. Links with the church and local communities support pupils' understanding of their place in God's world and their responsibilities for others. Children are eager to accept responsibility knowing that their ideas are valued and acted upon. They are proud of all their achievements, particularly in the way they support each other and those less fortunate than themselves.

SIAMS report November 2015 Leven Valley Church of England Primary School, Backbarrow, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 8QF

