

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Crich Carr Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Main Road, Whatstandwell, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 5EF

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Derbyshire
Name of multi-academy trust	n/a
Date of inspection	13 March 2018
Date of last inspection	6 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	112866
Headteacher	Vicki Holmes
Inspector's name and number	Kerry Palmer (60)

School context

Crich Carr is a smaller than average primary school with nursery provision, breakfast and after-school clubs. It serves the rural village of Whatstandwell and surrounding area. Almost all the children are of White British heritage. The proportion with additional needs is above average, however, the number in receipt of additional funding resulting from socio-economic factors is low. The headteacher has been in post since April 2017 but was an established member of the teaching staff prior to her appointment. St Mary's Parish Church is a good walk from the school. It is currently without a full-time priest.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Crich Carr (VC) Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- A highly skilled and energetic headteacher and staff team who are totally committed to providing the best education possible for each child driven by values which reflect Christian teaching.
- Staff, parents, governors and community work as one in the best interests of the children who attend their school.
- A culture of inclusion and community which sustains the view that all are unique and special and a willingness to share concerns and support each other.
- A mutually supportive relationship between school and parish which is strengthening the school's Christian distinctiveness.

Areas to improve

- Develop strategies to ensure that all stakeholders and the community at large are clear that the school looks to the teaching and example of Jesus to guide its aims, policies and practice.
- With the support of the diocese, explore ways to increase children's contributions to collective worship, including giving them regular opportunities to plan and deliver, to increase ownership.
- Incorporate structured governor monitoring and review of key facets of the school's Christian distinctiveness into the whole school monitoring programme to inform the school improvement plan.

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

Strong and well established Christian values, implicit in all school activity, meet the needs of all learners very successfully. Each child is recognised as unique and special with individual gifts and talents to be nurtured. Children are clearly happy, engaged and feel safe. They approach challenge with confidence and self-assurance. Consequently, they work hard and do well. The positive impact of their enthusiasm is evident in attendance well above expectation and good levels of progress and achievement from children. The school provides a rich and effective education for children of all abilities. Children have opportunities to engage in a multitude of activities beyond normal the classroom. These include residential trips, harmony singing, school allotment, themed sleepovers at school, all manner of sports and woodland exploration. Children have a tangible fascination for learning about the world around them which is used creatively to stimulate curiosity and spiritual development. Inspirational use is made of the original Victorian building, school house and surrounding play and woodland areas to provide an exciting and stimulating educational environment including forest school, education outdoors and a mix of recreational activities. The whole staff team know individual children exceptionally well, they skilfully and sensitively tailor learning activities to their particular needs. All members of the school community point to the central importance of key Christian values, such as trust and compassion, that shape relationships so well. Children live the values they are taught as caring and thoughtful individuals. Forgiveness and reconciliation are central to behaviour management strategies; children learn from their mistakes and are supportive of each other. However, the fact that Christian values arise from the teaching and example of Jesus Christ is not explicit on the school website, in documentation or articulated by many children, parents, governors or staff. Religious education (RE) is just one positive factor contributing to excellent social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. It also contributed significantly to the Christian ethos of the school. The introduction of the Understanding Christianity resource is ensuring that children are challenged with big questions and encouraged to decide for themselves. Considering the Easter story, one infant child said, 'Its called Good Friday even though it's not good!', another said Easter Sunday was about 'New life'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship, with a strong focus on Christian values clearly has a positive influence on children's attitudes, relationships and outlook on life. Well-planned themes, developed by the headteacher, incorporate major festivals of the church's year, Christian values and topical issues. A recent example was a focus, by this school with many sporting achievements, on the determination and perseverance of competitors in the para-Olympics. The impact is strengthened by planned links with RE topics, but the biblical context of the values promoted is not sufficiently emphasised. All teachers lead worship in turn but there continue to be only limited opportunities for the active participation of children in planning and leading worship. Pupil voice is heard through the weekly, whole school Friday Forum. For example, children's suggestions have resulted in more achievement assemblies. Whilst it is good to celebrate the fact that all children have special and different gifts and talents, the opportunity is currently missed to recognise that Christians believe that these are all gifts from God. Worship is enriched by occasional contributions from a parish lay reader and other Christian organisations. Children's prayer life is nurtured through regular opportunities to contribute their own prayers, prayer Monday, lunchtime and closing prayers. Children like their individual prayer candles, they speak of times for reflection to 'think and talk with God'. One mum commented that her child surprised the family by regularly saying grace before Sunday lunch. Children are familiar with many Bible stories. The significance of Lent is recognised in prayer trees which will move to church for the school Easter service. A young child wrote, 'I promise I will pray every day and think of you in the desert' and most could recall key aspects of Jesus 40 days in the wilderness. While they recognise the special nature of Jesus, an age appropriate appreciation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is under-developed. Concern for and empathy with the less fortunate is successfully nurtured resulting in enthusiastic support for a range of charities. Harvest celebrations were linked to support for the aquabox project and there is regular contact with Crich Careline, helping the local elderly citizens. There are strong links with St Mary's Parish Church which are actively maintained despite the current priest vacancy by an active lay ministry group. School festival services, primarily led by the children, such as Christmas and Easter are very well attended by families and folk from the community and much appreciated. However, these are currently the only opportunities for worship to be shared with families. Educational visits to 'find out about the church' are also a regular feature through which children learn something of Anglican tradition and practice. In this predominantly white, rural community, both collective worship and RE successfully widen children's awareness of the diverse and multi-faith society they are growing up in and engender attitudes of respect and understanding.

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

The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher, together with her professional, able and dedicated staff team, successfully ensure the best for every child. There is an enthusiasm for continuous development and striving for improvement and growth. Such a small team does so much; they love their school and their children. Again, strong Christian values are evident but their root in Gospel teaching is not articulated. Professional development is recognised as important and opportunities are grasped. The excellent RE subject leader's training to introduce Understanding Christianity resources and cascading to other staff being just one example. Governance is well informed and pro-active but there is no structured approach to monitoring and evaluation of aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness feeding into development planning. Consequently, areas to improve identified at the last SIAMS inspection have been only partially addressed. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, feel fully engaged in their children's education and school life. They spoke of 'the all-embracing family atmosphere', 'the warmth of the welcome', 'a moral foundation', and 'the teachers can't do enough'. An indicator of the school's all-embracing sense of community and compassion is found in its response to the sad loss, quite recently, of a pupil during a heart operation. Children spoke openly about their feelings of loss and support for the family. The value of partnerships and shared expertise is recognised. There are active links with a variety of groups. These include COGS, the ten primary school cluster who feed into the local secondary school, one feature of which is a pupil parliament. The ministry team at St Mary's Church actively promote local school involvement. Regular meetings are held with representatives of the three local schools which result in a range of shared activities which have included an Easter workshop and more recently a festival of song where Crich Carr's renowned Harmony group excelled. The school is recognised by all as central to village life. Examples are its contribution to the annual well-dressing and the Remembrance Service at Crich Stand. The school fully complies with statutory requirements for RE and collective worship and the potential for positive development is excellent.

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