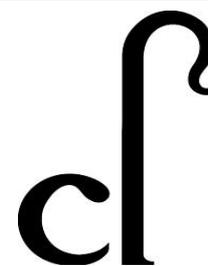


**St Mark's CE Primary School, Natland**

Oxenholme Lane  
Natland]  
Kendal  
LA9 7QH

**Diocese:** Carlisle  
**Local authority:** Cumbria  
**Dates of inspection:** 05/10/11  
**Date of last inspection:** 05/06/09  
**School's unique reference number:** 112325  
**Headteacher:** Mr Peter Barfoot  
**Inspector's name & number:** Penny Hollander National Society No. 526



**Diocese of Carlisle**  
**Growing Disciples**

**School context**

St Mark's school is a rural primary school in South Cumbria, on the outskirts of Kendal. It currently has 153 pupils on roll in school. Children come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds, a number from out of the immediate catchment area. The school has a successful reputation in a range of special educational needs provision. Almost all pupils are of white British ethnicity.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mark's, Natland as a Church of England school are good**

The school has a clear Christian vision and character which underpins the whole of school life and the values it both promotes, and puts into action in daily school life. The school benefits from its strong links with the church and Christian leadership within school. This ensures that it is very effective as a church school.

**Established strengths**

- Care, guidance and support given to all pupils
- Excellent links with both the parish and other local churches
- Strong Christian leadership from the headteacher

**Focus for development**

- Embed assessment of pupil progress in religious education
- Develop regular monitoring and evaluation of RE and collective worship across the school
- Involve pupils in initiatives for planning and leading collective worship

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

The Christian values that the school embraces have an outstanding impact on the whole life of the school. Children both know and say that these influence the way they live and treat one another in school. They are clearly happy and confident and say they feel safe. "We can talk to our teachers. They are very friendly and helpful and make learning fun. We are all included". Parents are impressed with the care and support their children are given, regardless of ability or need. A recent questionnaire showed that they felt that their children are happy at school. Challenging Christian values of grace, mercy and forgiveness are particularly emphasised as important in daily school life and older children particularly can explain that the "Fruits of the Spirit" such as love, joy, peace and kindness are part of what they try to do both within the school community and beyond. They recognise their responsibility towards one another and older pupils readily look after younger children and any disputes are quickly and fairly resolved in a spirit of reconciliation and compassion. Children enjoy the links they have with others beyond school and speak warmly of the links they have with other local schools and also with a school in another area which has a high proportion of Muslim pupils. "It helps us understand other people who may believe different

things to us” At a more global level they talk enthusiastically about their involvement in a water and sanitation project in Uganda project and how it is “fair” that everyone should have clean water. The school environment nourishes and challenges the spiritual development of pupils by the use of displays and reflective questioning. The Bible quiz display throughout the school for “The Good Book” week is an excellent example of this. Children are able to articulate how Christian teachings affect how they live their lives. They say that a recent storytelling event which involved visitors from different local churches increased their knowledge and understanding. They are able to reflect on their experiences and explore ways of expressing faith within and between different religions, “ We know that lots of people have different beliefs, which may not be the same as ours but we can share some of the same ideas about sharing and helping others who have less than what we’ve got”.

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

Children clearly enjoy worship times and eagerly participate in a variety of ways, both in helping with the organisation of these times or being actively engaged through reading prayers, answering questions, role play and singing. For example, in the act of worship observed they were keen to show their knowledge of the Bible through the characters they were dressed as during Book Week focus on “The Good Book” in celebration of the King James’ Bible. They were also able to relate this to a previous act of worship on early versions of the Bible. Children speak of how worship times help them to reflect on their own beliefs and be appreciative of the different talents and gifts of themselves and each other. One example they give is how symbols of individual achievement are regularly placed on the worship table and “offered to God”. Pupils talk appreciatively of the contributions made to school worship by both the vicar and visitors from local churches and organisations. They say it helps them to understand different Christian traditions. They are able to relate what they have learnt in worship times to their daily lives. Staff demonstrate their commitment to these occasions by being good role models for the children and frequently reinforce what has been heard in worship through reference in classroom lessons. Planning of worship is good and firmly embedded. However, at present, opportunities for children to plan and lead worship are mostly limited to being responsive to initiatives and decisions taken by adults, though there is evidence of an increased level of pupil involvement in planning worship which relates to their daily lives. This needs further development. Children value links with the local church community, particularly in the celebration of major Christian festivals during the year at the church. They are actively engaged on these occasions. Parental support for these events and also for class led assemblies in school demonstrates how much they appreciate the role of worship in school life.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Children enjoy their religious education (RE) lessons and can relate their learning to their own experiences and beliefs. For example in one lesson observed younger pupils in school were able to relate their learning about caring for God’s created world by suggesting ways they could help by making sure that they either put rubbish in bins or take it home after they have had a picnic. They were able to articulate God’s purpose in creation and how we need help. “He made people last of all so that they could look after his world.....We need God to help us to do it and tell us what we can do”. A range of teaching and learning strategies enable children to be actively engaged in their learning and assessment. They show ability to reflect on what they have learnt and develop an increasing spiritual and moral awareness through the subject. Teaching in RE subject contributes well to the distinctive Christian character of the school. One example observed during inspection was where older children were asked to write their own version of the Ten Commandments and one group when asked about why they had included forgiveness as one of their rules said “God has forgiven us for the bad things we have done, so we should forgive others”. Significant development has occurred since the last inspection about assessment of pupils’ progress in the subject with data used effectively to inform this. There is evidence that attainment is in line with other core subjects. However, this needs to continue to develop across the whole school so that teaching and learning outcomes and progression are firmly embedded in practice. RE is well planned and relevant training for staff is in place to support good learning.

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

The headteacher provides excellent Christian leadership in the school and in this he is well supported by the governors. Distinctive Christian values are applied to the whole school context and stakeholders can explain how these influence behaviour and attitudes across the school. These values inform policy and practice. Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibility to ensure that the foundation of the school is both maintained and developed. They monitor RE and collective worship on an informal basis at present but both they and other leaders in school recognise that this now needs to be on a more formal basis to ensure that succession planning is firmly in place. Issues identified by stakeholders are properly addressed within the Christian context of the school. There is strong mutual support between the school and partners in the local church and community, diocese and wider communities, including global ones. The school recognises the importance of links with more diverse faith communities and is continuing to develop links with a multi faith school in another area of the country.. Parents are fully supportive of all that the school does for their children, including how it both promotes and maintains its Christian character. They feel that they have an important contribution to make to the life of the school. Children both recognise and willingly take responsibility and appreciate the role the part they have to play in the life of their school. They are keen to develop their own planning and leading initiatives of worship times. The local community recognises and contributes well to the school as a church school and value the different ways in which the school participates in different aspects of community life, including them in many events, including the celebration of Christian festivals and celebrations.

SIAS report October 2011, St Mark's CE School, Natland, LA9 7QH