

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Kirk Smeaton Church of England Primary School	
Main Street, Kirk Smeaton, Pontefract WF8 3JY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Date of inspection	8 November 2017
Date of last inspection	23 June 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	VC 121573
Headteacher	Hannah Cuddy
Inspector's name and number	Malcolm Price 627

School context

Kirk Smeaton Primary School is a smaller than average village school. There are currently 107 children on roll, including those in the nursery. Over half of these children are from outside the school's catchment area. Children are predominantly from white British backgrounds. The percentage of children with additional needs is broadly in line with national averages. The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. There is a long-standing, mutually supportive relationship with the parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kirk Smeaton Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The distinctive Christian character of the school is illustrated by excellent relationships and a strong focus on shared values, which include forgiveness, hope, reverence and peace.
- Collective worship supports this distinctiveness and offers a range of opportunities for children to lead, participate and develop spiritually.
- School leaders are proactive in providing a nurturing environment based on Christian values. In this environment, children thrive personally, enjoy school life and make good progress academically.

Areas to improve

- Review the school's existing and effective Christian values and its vision statement in order to create a more sharply focussed set of core values.
- By embedding current good practice, seek ways for children to understand and articulate more clearly the links between the school's distinctively Christian values and their learning from the Bible.
- Develop a more rigorous but manageable approach to the evaluation of collective worship by encouraging a wider range of methods and participants.

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

The school's distinctive Christian values have been significantly developed since the previous inspection and, through the clear focus provided by the current school leadership, they are now a feature of daily school life and greatly influence the school's character. Each week a different value is selected, such as compassion or reverence, and this value is woven into the fabric of daily activities. As a result, children remember and can explain these values, for example by commenting that reverence means 'being respectful like you would in a church'. Children are exceptionally good at modelling these values for each other in the way they behave. For example, they show kindness by being inclusive and appreciating each other's contributions. Children are encouraged to congratulate one another for putting a value into practice and this leads to excellent relationships. Children understand that the values are based on the way Jesus behaved. As yet, they do not consistently make connections between the Christian values and Bible stories. The extensive range of values represents a wide range of behaviours but limits children's ability to recall them and the vision statement is not as accessible to children as it could be. The 'think' activity, connected to the weekly class sheet, provides a regular opportunity for each class to debate and discuss deeper moral and spiritual issues. Through activities such as these, children are able to explore spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters, enabling them to grow in their insight into important questions. For instance, when discussing what they would change if they could travel back in time, children show remarkable maturity by suggesting that altering the events of Jesus' crucifixion 'wouldn't be for the best' because 'that wouldn't be God's will' and 'Jesus wouldn't be able to take everyone's sins away'. Children are keen to show their class ethos book, which is kept in a special place in each classroom, and illustrates activities and events linked to RE, collective worship and school values. Some classes have a candle on display and children can explain that this represents 'Jesus as the light of the world'. Children understand the liturgical colours as representative of the church seasons. Prayer is a regular feature of the day, including grace before lunch and, during Advent, classes have a time of reflection to end the day. These aspects of daily school life help to affirm the school's Christian character. RE lessons contribute well to the school's distinctive character. For instance, children learn about the creation story and are encouraged to tackle big questions such as 'Does a beautiful world mean a wonderful God?' Parents are highly supportive of the school as a church school and both they and their children appreciate the joint activities and strong links with St. Peter's Church. The school has responded positively to an anticipated dip in Key Stage 2 test results by providing intervention and booster classes, through developing talk for writing and by investing in training and resources for reading. School leaders are aware of issues in certain cohorts but their detailed analysis and strong focus on improvement means that progress measures are very good. For example, school leaders are accurate in their judgement that there is evidence of 'excellent progress in Key Stage 1 this year.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship, in a variety of formats, is an important event in each day. Children are enthusiastic about collective worship and look forward to participating. They explain that there is always prayer and that the focus for each week is one of the Christian values. Children play a significant role in leading worship, for example in a class 'whoosh assembly' about the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, during which they narrated and mimed the story. Children listen carefully and, as a result, can explain that 'God will always be on our side if we trust Him'. Older children take a lead in rewarding others for their engagement in worship. The recently-formed ethos council and school council also take a lead in congratulating others for demonstrating Christian values such as love, peace and equality. As part of worship, they give praise to others for being kind, showing courage or 'always being peaceful'. Worship is enhanced by reflection and by uplifting singing. The hall is shared with community groups, which restricts its visual appearance as a worship space. However, the school has been inventive in using a small table and portable displays to enhance the space during worship, and these are set up by children. School leaders plan collective worship thematically in detail with cross references to Christian values and to Bible passages. Worship is well supported by the local vicar, who has also written services and liturgy for special occasions and developed a stations of the cross activity for children. This is increasing children's understanding of the relevance of worship. Parents enjoy their visits to the local church for festivals and say that children take a major part in leading. School leaders are right in encouraging parents to attend worship in school more regularly and in their belief that this would enhance worship activities. They have also made progress in developing systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship, for example through gathering the views of children. They have responded to children's suggestions, for instance by promoting a wider range of worship songs. However, they are aware that there is potential for widening the range of people who contribute to monitoring and evaluation, and have considered more innovative and manageable ways of gathering responses and opinions. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship.

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

The school's leaders, including governors, are highly effective in ensuring its success as a church school. They have a common understanding of how to shape the school's Christian character and their self-evaluation is accurate in terms of strengths and areas for development. Their consistent expression of a distinctively Christian vision for the school has led to rapid progress in enhancing the school's character, particularly in terms of forming and applying a broad set of Christian values where these were not previously explicit. The result of this leadership is that children are confident in explaining how the Christian values impact on their attitudes and in recognising when they are demonstrated. The headteacher and other leaders have made strong and timely decisions regarding the breadth of these values and are right in believing that it is now appropriate to refine these values to reflect current practice. Their approach has resulted in teachers being confident in seeking ways to connect classroom learning and activities to the distinctive values, enabling children to gain maturity in expressing their opinions and beliefs. Governors are highly supportive of school leaders and share the same priorities, such as the process of reviewing the vision statement. They attend relevant training, which enables them to undertake their role in upholding the school's Christian character and providing suitable challenge. The governors' newsletters to parents help to communicate these important aspects of their role. Links with the local church are well established and school leaders have developed a strong working relationship with the vicar, who supports the school effectively. Foundation governors and other church members are involved in school life, for example through a knitted posada activity encouraging children to think about refugees. The school is also supported by a local evangelical church, especially through Christmas drama. This is widening children's appreciation of different forms of Christian expression. Leaders encourage and value the opinions of children. Parents say that 'if a child has something close to their heart they can say it and will be allowed to organise it'. This results in children organising events such as a cake sale or sponsored walk. In addition to the ethos and school councils, children enjoy taking on leadership roles through the eco-council, the anti-bullying group and as junior road safety officers. Through these roles, children gain confidence in leading, as shown by the self-assurance demonstrated in making an impromptu announcement about an anti-bullying website. Children, through the confidence given to them by school leaders, have a wide perspective on the world, for example through links with a sponsored child in Burkina Faso and a school in Mozambique. They demonstrate compassion and appreciate those less fortunate than themselves by fundraising for a range of charities, including Children in Need, Macmillan and Sports Relief. Leaders enable children to learn more about diversity and to understand those of other faiths, for example through their studies in RE relating to Hanukkah in Judaism and rangoli patterns in Hinduism. A visit to a Buddhist centre and a lesson about Divali from a Hindu parent resulted in children saying that they look forward to 'understanding more about other religions'. There is no doubt that leaders are both modelling and encouraging the school's aim to 'Let God's love shine in our lives as we learn together'.

SIAMS report November 2017 Kirk Smeaton C of E Primary School WF8 3JY