

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School Brighouse

Waterloo Road, Brighouse, HD6 2AN

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Leeds

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Date of inspection

14 February 2017

Date of last inspection

19 June 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided 107547

Headteacher

Karen Smith

Inspector's name and number

Lynne Gillions 662

School context

Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and religious education (RE) subject leader. The school is a two-form entry junior school with 240 pupils on roll. Most pupils are of White British heritage and almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The number of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and those with special educational needs are above the national averages.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's Church of England Junior School as a Church of England school are good

- The school is well led by a committed headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders and governors who identify appropriate priorities and ensure that Christian values such as perseverance, hope and kindness are promoted and underpin all aspects of school life. This creates a purposeful learning environment where children behave well and make good progress.
- The school nurtures and supports vulnerable children and their families very well, by helping to remove barriers to learning and putting in place support programmes to address specific needs.
- The church shows outstanding commitment to the school in offering support which enables children to explore spirituality in creative ways.
- Interactive reflection areas in classrooms are well used and offer children the space to pray and reflect on spiritual issues.
- The Christian ethos of the school makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children.

Areas to improve

- Expand children's understanding of different expressions of the Christian faith by inviting visitors from other denominations and visiting different types of churches as well as the local Anglican church.
- Increase children's understanding of global issues by raising their awareness of communities in other countries and identifying the similarities and differences to their own locality.
- Put in place a systematic, robust schedule of monitoring and evaluating the school's performance as a church school which involves all stakeholders. Outcomes should identify best practice and areas for development which should feed into the School Development Plan and secure further improvement.

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

Christian values such as thankfulness, forgiveness and peace strongly influence all areas of school life. They have an impact on relationships, behaviour and learning. Children can talk about what they mean and give some examples of how they affect their lives. When thinking about kindness they talked about the story of the Good Samaritan and how it reminded them to be kind to each other. On a display about forgiveness one child acknowledged, 'It is hard to say sorry because you don't want to admit it is your fault.' Staff also provide good role models for the children by demonstrating the values in practice.

Christian values also contribute to a good learning environment. Children are seen as made in the image of God and are therefore encouraged to develop their full potential. They are taught to persevere and not give up. Teachers regularly assess children's learning and discuss it with senior leaders. The school tracks progress effectively, identifying which children need extra support. As a result, children make good progress. A fall in achievement in the 2016 Key Stage 2 tests has been analysed, areas needing greater emphasis are being addressed and leaders are closely monitoring performance to improve outcomes in 2017.

The school shows real concern for vulnerable children and families. Two learning mentors offer support to individuals, groups and parents to help all children access their education. The school has recently established a quiet room to provide a calm space when needed. Parents appreciate the care given to their children and they know that they can approach school if they have any problems and that issues will be resolved.

School provides a range of opportunities to nurture children's spirituality and there is evidence of some outstanding practice. The reflection areas in classrooms which the school council helped to design are well used. They relate to the current Christian value and each class has a Reflection Book in which children can give their responses to the value. They all have prayer trees so that children can pray if they choose. An outdoor area is also being developed. The church supports two children's workers who come into school. They help children explore Bible stories through Godly play and also lead a Christian Cracker Club three times a week where children undertake a range of activities on a spiritual theme.

Behaviour in school is good. Children and adults get on well together and older children support younger ones through the buddy scheme and by being befrienders at playtimes. They take these responsibilities seriously and parents appreciate the positive impact they have on both older and younger children.

Children demonstrate an understanding of different faiths and cultures and show a respect for diversity. However, their understanding of different expressions of Christianity needs to be developed.

The pervading Christian ethos of the school is very effective in supporting the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of school life. Children enjoy it and behave respectfully during acts of worship. They sometimes start on entry with the choir singing or individual children playing instruments giving them opportunities to offer their talents in worship. Children behave respectfully during worship, listen well, volunteer appropriate responses and sing beautifully.

Children lead worship in class, in the hall and in church. They also enjoy being asked to participate when adults lead worship. All teaching staff and clergy regularly lead worship. There is scope to invite a wider range of visitors to lead and thereby increase children's understanding of different Christian denominations.

A Christian value forms the underlying theme each half term and this is supported by Bible stories and other relevant material. Children can respond to these themes during worship, by using the reflection areas in school and by putting their comments on the tree of values in the hall. 'We can bring peace in our class by speaking to people in a kind way and treating them with respect.' Christian festivals and celebrations are held in church and parents are invited. All stakeholders enjoy these times when the whole school community come together.

Children are aware of some Anglican traditions. They know that liturgical colours represent different seasons of the year. For example, children could explain that Lent is linked to the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert and Epiphany was when the wise men visited the baby Jesus. They also have some understanding of the Christian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Children understand that prayer is important to believers and the school provides good opportunities for children to pray during worship and throughout the school day. Prayer trees in classrooms have coloured ribbons available. Each colour represents a different type of prayer such as thankfulness or forgiveness and children if they wish can tie a ribbon on the tree to represent their personal prayer. They like to use these prayer trees. They also have opportunities to write prayers and offer their own prayers in worship times.

Some monitoring of collective worship takes place but this tends to be informal. The school would benefit from a more structured approach which involves all members of the school community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment in RE are mainly in line with national expectations and children are making good progress. The curriculum offers children a range of experiences to explore different faiths and moral questions. Overall, teaching and learning is good. The school particularly values discussions and questioning techniques which develop children's thinking skills. In a Year 6 lesson, children showed the capacity to challenge and adapt their own thinking when discussing a moral dilemma. The breadth of work in RE is enabling children to develop a range of skills and strategies such as 'conscience alley' where children are exposed to different views on an issue are giving children the capacity to analyse both sides of an argument.

Pupils are developing a good understanding of the key aspects of Christianity. However, they need to develop a broader understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural, worldwide faith and also as it is expressed in different denominations.

Children enjoy learning about other faiths. Year 3 children were able to talk about some Jewish customs such as the Seder plate and relate it to the Passover story in the Old Testament. Excellent support from the church worker using Godly play helps them explore these stories, deepening their overall understanding and enabling them to empathise with the biblical characters. Children would benefit from more opportunities to meet visitors from other faiths and visit different places of worship. The school has identified this in their own monitoring and has plans in hand to address the issue.

Learning objectives are clearly communicated to pupils so they understand what they are going to learn. Work is sometimes differentiated so that all learners can access the curriculum at their level. Marking in books could be more consistent in addressing lesson objectives and identifying next steps. However, the school has improved assessment procedures and all books now identify the children's attainment at the end of each unit. This information is collated by the subject leader who then tracks progress across the whole school. She also monitors the subject well using strategies such as the scrutiny of books and discussions with children and this is leading to improved outcomes for children. The subject leader attends relevant training and is keeping abreast of new initiatives. The foundation governor also does some monitoring so the school is well placed to continue improving.

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

Leaders share a vision for the school based on Christian values. The school is well led by the headteacher and there is overall confidence in the leadership team and the direction in which it is taking the school. Staff feel enabled and well supported in their different roles. All stakeholders appreciate the important part that Christian values play in defining the school's identity and the impact that they have on the whole of school life. 'We look out for and look after each other across the whole school community.'

Leaders and staff have worked hard to improve outcomes for children and they analyse performance data closely to ensure children receive the most appropriate provision to meet their needs. For some children, this is provided by the extra support groups that work well in bridging the gaps in their learning. Others benefit from input from the learning mentors to address their well-being or to support their parents. Leaders, governors and staff demonstrate their commitment to the school's Christian values in their outstanding dedication to vulnerable pupils.

Leaders ensure that collective worship and RE are given appropriate status in the school and people receive appropriate training to help them fulfil their roles effectively.

The school has a number of partnerships. The mutually supportive relationship with the church is an example of excellent practice. As well as regular input from the vicar, the church also funds two children's workers to enable them to work in school and this is having a significant impact on children's spiritual development. Partnerships with other schools, the diocese and the local authority also make positive contributions to the life of the school. Parents appreciate the relationship they have with school. They appreciate the open-door policy and feel assured that any problems they encounter will be addressed promptly.

Governors are committed to the school and have a clear focus on raising standards. They would now benefit from putting in place a more structured timetable of monitoring activities. This should address all aspects of the school's performance as a church school. Strengths should be acknowledged and areas identified for development should then feed into the School Development Plan so that the school continues to improve.