

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Crakehall Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Green, Crakehall, Bedale, DL8 1HP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Date of inspection	17 November 2016
Date of last inspection	20 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC 121483
Headteacher	Lindsay Evans
Inspector's name and number	Lynne Gillions 662

School context

The school is a smaller than average primary school with 98 pupils on roll. Since the last inspection, the school has formed a collaboration with Spennithorne Church of England Primary School and a new executive headteacher is in post. The percentage of pupils who take up free school meals in Key Stage 2 is significantly below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is significantly below average. There are currently no pupils from minority ethnic groups.

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

- All stakeholders are strongly supportive of the Christian foundation of the school where Christian values such as kindness, empathy and partnership are applied to all areas of school life. Whilst these values are not wholly underpinned with a clear theological understanding, they enable children to feel confident and enthusiastic about their learning.
- Pupils are polite and well behaved and are supportive of each other and the strong, nurturing relationships create a positive, trusting environment which is conducive to learning.
- The close and mutually beneficial relationship with the church makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
- Leaders work hard to secure the sustainability of the school and pupils benefit from being at the heart of their local community and from having opportunities to serve within it.

Areas to improve

- Involve all stakeholders in a review of the school's vision and refine the Christian values so that they have a stronger theological base and become more explicit and deeply embedded.
- Ensure that the governors' monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance as a church school is systematic, encompasses all stakeholders and feeds into the School Development Plan.
- Provide more opportunities for children to explore spirituality through focused activities, discussion and by providing interactive spaces which enable them to make personal responses to specific issues and themes.
- Increase children's awareness of different Christian traditions.

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

Christian values such as kindness, support and partnership are integrated into the life of the school. They are prominently displayed and are publicly acknowledged on newsletters and letterheads. They are valued by all stakeholders. The school has identified that these values are quite numerous but nevertheless children can make some links between them and their daily lives. One child talked about tenacity and the importance of persevering and moving forwards. One parent described the school's ethos and values as inclusive and enabling his child to explore issues of faith for himself and others supported this viewpoint.

In 2016 achievement was below national averages in Early Years and Key Stage 1 but, with the exception of mathematics, above national averages at Key Stage 2. The school has put measures in place to raise achievement and leaders recognise that Christian values make a positive contribution to this process. Children have a confident approach to their learning and enjoy coming to school.

Behaviour in school is good and children are polite and friendly. The Behaviour Policy makes links with the school's values and states, 'We seek to promote good personal relationships between people based on co-operation, mutual respect and Christian values.' Consequently, relationships are supportive and strong between all stakeholders. Staff express how much they enjoy working in school and parents profess their 'full confidence' in the staff. Parents know their children are cared for well and relate this to the Christian ethos of the school. One parent spoke of the kindness of the school community in integrating her child into school. A child talked of the excellent support he had been given by the staff in addressing his learning difficulties and building his confidence.

Children explore spirituality in collective worship, religious education and other areas of the curriculum such as their work with Forest Schools. Children also get involved in specific activities which support spiritual development. The Parish Pilgrimage project enabled pupils from both schools in the collaboration to explore six local churches together. Specific activities, supported by the church, have included working with a poet to create their own praise psalms and creating Kadinsky Circles where pupils worked with staff and parishioners to sew together individual circles which represented their personal sense of self and their place in family and the community. This is now on display in the parish church. Such projects help the children make good progress in their spiritual development. In order to develop this further they would benefit from more ongoing opportunities to reflect and respond by, for example, making the reflection areas interactive and linking them more closely to current themes and Christian values.

Overall, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good and Christian values contribute positively to the process. Children are aware of right and wrong and the importance of treating others with kindness and respect. Their social skills are good. They have opportunities to take on responsibilities as monitors, buddies and members of the school council. On the day of the inspection they were hosting a World War 2 tea party for elderly residents of the parish. The residents spoke of their appreciation of the links the school had with them and the children obviously enjoy and benefit from such occasions. The strong musical tradition in school means children are able to perform well at such events. Children enjoy learning about other faiths and cultures in religious education. They spoke enthusiastically about their visit to a mosque which had increased their understanding of the Islamic faith and the Muslim community. The school's ongoing relationship with Mettapalyam, a community in India, is increasing children's awareness of global issues and helping them to see the similarities and differences between the two communities.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of school life. Children enjoy participating in it and do so respectfully and enthusiastically. Staff also benefit from it saying 'it is a thread we can follow through the day'. Christian values, biblical teaching, special events and festivals are included in the yearly plan which is put together by children from the collaborating schools. Pupils would benefit from a more coherent focus on Christian values which would allow them to be explored in greater depth. Some children can relate what they hear in collective worship to their own lives. One child explained how the story of Elijah fleeing from Jezebel had focused on bullying behaviour and had demonstrated how they should not treat others in that way. Others understand that collective worship challenges them to behave well and show consideration for others.

School worship begins with a lit candle and a liturgical welcome. Other Anglican practice such as the use of liturgical cloths and following the church year enable children to understand the significance of different seasons such as Lent representing the period when Jesus was in the desert for forty days. They are aware of the important place that Jesus holds for Christians, one child describing him as 'a light in the darkness'. They also have a basic understanding of the Christian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Whilst children have a good understanding of Christianity and some Anglican practices they are not clear about expressions of it in Christian denominations other than the Church of England.

Older pupils have opportunities throughout the year to plan and lead their own acts of worship and this sometimes leads them to research issues for themselves. It is also giving them an understanding of the different elements of worship.

Children understand that prayer is about talking to God and is important to people of faith and they sometimes contribute their own written and spontaneous prayers to collective worship. Prayers are also said at different points of the school day. Reflective spaces could be further developed to offer more opportunities for personal prayer.

All teaching staff lead collective worship and they regularly monitor it. Children have been involved in some discussions about worship and this should be developed further. Parents have also occasionally been consulted as demonstrated in their comments about the Easter service. Governors also, when they are able, participate in collective worship. It would be beneficial to establish a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating collective worship which involves all stakeholders.

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

All leaders are fully committed to the Christian values and ethos of the school. They see them as central to the school's distinctiveness. In their recent quest to ensure the future sustainability of the school, governors agreed to form a collaboration with Spennithorne Church of England Primary School. During this process, governors wanted to ensure that the Christian character of the school was preserved and this was a main priority when considering possible partnerships. It would now be an appropriate time to review the school's vision and values with all stakeholders to ensure that agreed Christian values remain at the heart of all areas of school life. This review should also include an exploration of the theology behind each one in order to better communicate the links between the values and biblical teaching.

Leaders are putting a strong focus on raising achievement and are putting measures in place to raise standards and are targeting support where necessary. These measures are being monitored by the governing body who acknowledge that the school's Christian values play a key role in establishing an environment which supports good learning outcomes.

A new subject leader for RE has recently been appointed and she has identified appropriate areas for development. It would be helpful for governors to monitor this process as new procedures are implemented. Governors have an accurate view of the school's Christian character but they need to be more systematic in their monitoring activities and outcomes should celebrate strengths and areas for development should feed into the School Development Plan. The school has strong relationships with parents and they are very supportive of the school's Christian ethos. They know that staff are always accessible and deal quickly with any issues and put in appropriate support, where necessary involving outside agencies.

The school also has a mutually supportive relationship with the church which is a strength of the school and makes a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. This partnership, along with the school's involvement in a range of village events, helps to firmly root children into their local community.

All leaders and staff would benefit from updated training which would enable the school to further develop and consolidate the good practice which is currently in place.