

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Sutton upon Derwent Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Main Street, Sutton upon Derwent, York, YO41 4BN

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	York
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Date/s of inspection	24 May 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 118026
Headteacher	Angela Ekers
Inspector's name and number	Judy Jones 797

School context

The school is smaller than average, taking 87 pupils aged 3 to 11 from the rural area of Sutton upon Derwent, York. The proportion of pupils entitled to additional support through pupil premium funding is below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Almost all children are of White British heritage. The school has grown significantly since the previous inspection. For the last five years the school has been collaborating with a similar school nearby. The head teacher joined just after the previous inspection. She leads both schools, spending half her time in each.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sutton upon Derwent as a Church of England school are good

- The strong Christian ethos of the school enables children to feel safe and happy and leads to them making good progress in their lessons and personal development.
- Good leadership ensures that the school's chosen Christian values are built into the whole curriculum and are known and respected by the children.
- Religious education (RE) teaching is exceptionally imaginative and enjoyed by children in all classes in the school.

Areas to improve

- Build on children's keenness to participate in worship by enabling pupils, in particular the older ones, to lead and present worship more frequently than at present.
- Ensure the link between Christian values and Biblical teaching is reinforced as much as possible.
- Identify specific steps in children's learning in RE so that progress in the subject can be measured accurately in all years.

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

The strong emphasis on Christian values has established a community in which children thrive and do their best to live up to these values. They feel encouraged and supported and therefore make good progress in all aspects of their school work and in their personal development. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make particularly good progress and are fully involved in the life of the school. Behaviour and relationships are excellent at all levels and children say the best thing about school is “the way everyone gets on and there is never any bullying.” Attendance is above average and exclusions unknown. The school has identified twelve Christian values as the foundation for its ethos. Children find the more abstract ones, such as humility and compassion, quite hard to explain but are very clear about others such as thankfulness and friendship and know the relevance of these to their own lives. However, in spite of children’s good knowledge of Bible stories, they do not readily link these to the school’s values or describe how the life and teachings of Jesus can show them examples for their own lives. The school’s grounds are constantly being developed, in part by the children, as a resource for spiritual development. As a result, children have great respect for the beauty of their surroundings, for the gardens they tend, and for animals, especially their hen and the new chickens. Recent developments are the shelter with windows on three sides painted with Christian scenes by the children, and the adventure walkway they asked to be built in the shape of a cross. The leadership recognises the need to introduce children to a wider range of faiths and cultures than they meet locally and so there are trips to a Buddhist temple and a Hindu cultural centre, as well as to York Minster. A visit from an Imam who answered children’s questions has helped to increase their understanding and respect for Islam and other religions. Children feel comfortable expressing their own ideas, whether of different faiths or none, because all views are valued. The teaching of RE is exceptionally creative and imaginative and makes a significant contribution to children’s knowledge of Christian and other world religions and to children’s spiritual development. For example, lessons are sometimes set outside in the sensory garden. This setting encourages children to think more deeply about difficult questions and appreciate the pleasure and calmness they feel in the garden they have helped to make.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a fixed point in a busy day and children see it as an important part of their lives. They say worship is usually ‘really fun’ and see it as a time to remind them of the school’s values when they are all together like a family. The incumbent or the Reader takes a session every week and senior teachers as well as the headteacher lead worship so that everyone feels included. Worship is distinctively Christian and often uses Anglican responses to introduce the service. Worship helps children embrace the idea, supported by excellent RE teaching, of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Planning is thorough and well organised and makes the most of the resources available. For example, children’s experience is enhanced by monthly worship in the nearby church where, unlike the school hall, there is room for parents to attend. The church is also used for festival services such as Christmas and Harvest Festival when parents and others in the community are invited. Since the previous inspection the involvement of children in worship has increased, and each class plans and presents worship once a term. This is a big event, especially for the younger children who talk about their worship with great pride. Older children help to set up worship sessions and are keen to help. They are enthusiastic about their class worship and would enjoy doing it more often, though, as they point out “it’s a lot of work.” Prayer and reflection are central to worship, and children are familiar with the Lord’s Prayer and their school prayer. They are used to writing and sharing their own prayers, sometimes based on the school’s values. Music and drama extend children’s enjoyment of worship and reinforce values such as trust and forgiveness.

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

Good leadership by the headteacher, based on a clear and practical vision of the school as a church school has enabled the school to grow and flourish since the previous inspection. Although the headteacher spends half her time in the sister school, the school’s values and routines are so well established that the ethos is consistently good at all times. The embedding of the school’s Christian values in all subjects of the curriculum has a powerful impact on children’s attitudes to work and on the caring nature of the school. Consequently, standards are generally above expectations. Planning is very thorough and based on rigorous evaluation. Issues identified at the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully and have led to significant improvements. In particular, the role of governors in overseeing the school’s distinctiveness as a church school has been strengthened. Governors now share evaluation of the school’s distinctiveness and discuss ways to support the vision through a fixed agenda item on each Curriculum and Spiritual Development committee meeting. They also ensure the school meets statutory requirements for collective worship and RE. Children are asked their views. For example, the number of values was cut down from sixteen to twelve on their advice. Leadership of RE is outstanding. Planning is thorough and

consistency excellent, partly because RE is taught by the same teacher to all four classes. The teacher draws widely on resources as well as her own creativity and has used her expertise to train colleagues in the sister school. A start has been made on establishing assessment based on the new Agreed Syllabus for RE but, as yet, the school does not have a sufficiently rigorous system for all year groups. The school makes very good use of support from the diocese in providing training for leadership in church schools, and teachers benefit from close contact with colleagues in their collaborating school. The good relationship with the local church enriches children's school life and the leadership is active in promoting links with other religious groups and with the local community. For example, children invite all the local residents to their Christmas service and to coffee at school afterwards. The school building is small and the expanding numbers mean it is only just big enough. However, the headteacher and governors have amply compensated for the lack of indoor space by creating an exceptional outdoor environment that includes a wild area, a shelter where children can go to be quiet, an outside teaching space, a greenhouse and a chicken run. All these make a significant contribution to children's spiritual development and sense of wonder.

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