

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Lightcliffe Church of England Primary School

Wakefield Road, Lightcliffe, Halifax HX3 8SH

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Leeds**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Calderdale

Date of inspection

25 September 2017

Date of last inspection

7 March 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

MAT Academy 144865

Headteacher

Charles Woodbridge

Inspector's name and number

Lynne Gillions 662

#### School context

Lightcliffe is a two-form entry primary school with 421 pupils on roll. It converted to academy status on 1 August 2017 and is now part of the Abbey Multi Academy Trust. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average as is the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language. Similarly, the proportions of pupils with special educational needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium are below national averages. The school has a relatively stable population with low mobility rates.

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

- The school is well led by a committed headteacher, ably supported by governors and staff, who are wholly committed to a shared vision which ensures pupils are educated in a school with a strong Christian ethos.
- Christian values such as trust, forgiveness and hope are firmly embedded and make a positive contribution to standards, behaviour, welfare and relationships. All stakeholders value their impact on school life.
- Pupils enjoy school and make good progress in most areas, consistently achieving standards above national averages.
- The supportive relationship with the church contributes to the spiritual development of the children.
- Pupils are very aware of the needs of others and actively support a school and village link in Mara, Tanzania alongside other local, national and global organisations.

#### Areas to improve

- In religious education, ensure work is well matched to learners' needs and marking identifies next steps. Include visits to more places of worship to firmly embed pupils' understanding of different faiths.
- Put in place a systematic, robust schedule of monitoring and evaluating the school's performance as a church school which involves all stakeholders and is overseen by governors. Outcomes should identify best practice and areas for development which should feed into the School Development Plan and secure further improvement.
- Involve pupils more in the planning and delivery of collective worship and strengthen their understanding of the Christian view of God.
- Provide more interactive opportunities and spaces for children to reflect on spiritual issues and to offer their personal responses thereby enabling them to explore their own personal understanding of spirituality.

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

The school has identified a range of Christian values such as trust, forgiveness and hope which are deeply embedded and all stakeholders acknowledge the impact they have on all areas of school life. They are displayed throughout school, but more importantly, they are in evidence in relationships, in behaviour, in the care for the pupils and they are modelled by the staff and lived out in the whole school community. 'They are not just words; the children genuinely live by them.' Children said that they helped them to be better people and as a consequence they are happy in school and enjoy learning. A specific value is focused on each half term and classes also choose some to reflect their own aspirations. Each week, some children are chosen, often by the pupils themselves, to receive an award for actively demonstrating one of the Christian values. Children are taught from Reception that they are special and loved by God. These activities demonstrate exemplary practice and show the significance given to the Christian character of the school.

Values such as endurance also contribute to academic standards. Children's achievement is consistently above national averages in most areas although writing has been identified as an area which falls below and needs further improvement and the school is putting in place measures to address this issue. Christian values also make a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils and to the good behaviour in evidence. They are closely linked to the school's behaviour strategies and to British values thereby giving a coherent message to the children.

Attendance in school is good and above the national average.

Children have opportunities to explore spirituality, particularly in collective worship, religious education (RE) and through their links with the church. There are also reflective spaces in classrooms but there is scope to improve these and develop other areas in the building and in the grounds so that they are more creative, interactive and meaningful, giving children the opportunity to engage more purposefully and offer their own personal responses.

The school has links with a school in Mara, Tanzania. Visitors from there have been to school and a member of staff has visited Mara. Children raise funds, sometimes on their own initiative, to support the school and this is raising children's awareness of the needs of others and also the many benefits that they enjoy contrasting the Tanzanian children's pleasure in small things which they often take for granted. This link is giving children an understanding of the wider world. Children also recognise that there are different communities and faith groups more locally and they appreciate the importance of learning about other faiths and cultures. They have opportunities to engage with their own community through the link with the church, through the Parents, Friends and Staff Association (PFSA) events and fundraising activities and by visits to the nearby old people's home.

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

Collective worship is an important part of school life, a time when the school family comes together. It makes a valuable contribution to the school's Christian ethos. Each half term there is a focus on one of the school's Christian values and the content includes biblical material, Christian festivals and other relevant events. Pupils can recall Bible stories and Christian values and can talk about what they have learnt. For example, in the story of David and Goliath one child said that you don't have to be big and strong to overcome problems, you need to trust God. Others spoke of how Christian values were teaching them to be honest and helping them to make friends. Whilst children demonstrate a good understanding of Bible stories they are less sure of deeper Christian beliefs such as the Christian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Further age appropriate emphasis on these more theological concepts would equip children to discuss spiritual issues and develop their own opinions with greater confidence.

Worship is sometimes delivered in class and the school is working towards greater consistency across school.

During the inspection, pupils behaved respectfully in both key stage and class worship. They listen well and readily answer questions and sometimes participate in presentations at the front. Greater emphasis could be put on giving children time to fully reflect on the theme. Children enjoy being given active roles and are ready to take on more responsibility for planning and delivering collective worship themselves.

Prayers are said during worship and at other points during the school day. Children have opportunities to write and share their prayers and some are on display both around school and in the quiet outside area. Their understanding of prayer could be further developed by giving them opportunities for spontaneous prayer.

The church supports the school well with the vicar regularly leading worship in school and Christian festivals and special occasions being celebrated in the church. All stakeholders enjoy these events and are very positive about the support given to the school by the church. Children have some understanding of Anglican traditions and are aware of seasons such as Advent and Lent. All teaching staff lead worship and occasionally worship is led by other visitors such as when the bishop came to bless a new cross that the school had specifically designed and made. The school recognises that collective worship would be invigorated by including a more diverse range of people to lead worship.

Some monitoring and evaluating of worship takes place and one outcome from a learning walk was to display pictures of the school's cross in all classrooms. The monitoring of collective worship now needs to be incorporated into a more robust overall system of evaluating the school's performance as a church school which involves all stakeholders.

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

RE is a valued subject which plays an important role in securing an effective Christian ethos in the school and is well linked to the school's Christian values.

Standards in RE are generally in line and sometimes above national expectations. Children develop a range of skills as they progress through school. In Reception, they learn to offer their views and listen to each other's opinions and by upper Key Stage 2 they are able to undergo their own research and create presentations using ICT. Children enjoy RE, particularly when it involves practical activities such as drama, art, music and ICT.

In observed lessons, Year 2 pupils were encouraged to show empathy and develop an understanding of victims and perpetrators following dramatic presentations they had performed. In Year 4, children were exploring the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah partly by eating apples and honey which symbolise a 'sweet new year'. Teachers have very good relationships with the children and encourage them to give of their best. There is some good teaching and learning in RE lessons and this is most effective when work is well matched to the ability of the children. However, more differentiation would benefit those children who need more support with their learning and those who need to be challenged more rigorously and this would help ensure that all children concentrate well throughout the lesson and make sustained progress. Marking should also focus on RE objectives and next steps so that children can see more clearly how they can improve their work.

Children are well supported by the vicar and by visits to the local church when learning about Christianity. Activities such as mock baptisms and occasions when parishioners arrange activities in the church help enrich children's understanding of the faith. They also enjoy learning about other faiths, sometimes by having visitors in school. Their understanding would be more firmly embedded if more visits to different places of worship were included in the curriculum. Special activities such as the RE enrichment day help to bring the subject alive as children explore different activities in mixed age groupings.

Pupils are assessed at the end of each unit of work and outcomes are collated by the subject leader enabling her to track progress and achievement. This data is shared with governors. A new governor with responsibility for RE has been appointed as part of the recent restructuring of governance. There is a new RE curriculum coming in the near future and the subject leader is going on the appropriate training so she will be well placed to lead the forthcoming changes.

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

The school is well led by a headteacher with a clear personal commitment and a Christian vision which is shared by governors and staff. This is a school where leaders ensure Christian values are threaded through all areas of school life. They all recognise the part they play in making the school a place where children and staff work in harmony, a place where children can thrive. They recognise that they create an environment where children are able to learn effectively. Relationships in the whole school community are strong and leaders have established a sense of teamwork so that staff and pupils all work well together.

Leaders have recently been heavily focused on moving the school into a multi academy trust. They were committed to joining a partnership which would acknowledge and enhance their Christian foundation. As such, they have become part of the Abbey MAT which has a strong commitment to this area and is well placed to support the school in moving its Christian status forward.

Parents are very supportive of the school and work in partnership to support their children and the PFSA organises a range of activities to raise funds for school. They see the school as very supportive and say all staff are approachable and will address any issues they raise. Parents are very appreciative of the support the school gives them and their children if they have specific problems, always seeking to remove any barriers to their learning. The pupil planners and newsletters provide an effective ongoing means of communication between home and school.

The church and the diocese are also important partners with the school whether it be support from parishioners in school, input from the clergy or advice about converting to academy status.

Partnerships with other schools in the area and links with the Mara community mean leaders are helping children to understand their place as part of local and global communities.

Leaders ensure training is provided so that people can fulfil their roles effectively and continue to move the school forward in providing an effective church school education.