



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Stephen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Gaythorne Road
West Bowling
Bradford
BD5 7HU

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: Bradford

Dates of inspection: 15 January 2015

Date of last inspection: March 2010

School's unique reference number: 107323

Headteacher: Lesley Heathcote

Inspector's name and number: Lynne Gillions 662

School context

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School is a two form entry primary school with 458 pupils on roll serving a mainly Pakistani community. A recent influx of pupils from Eastern Europe means there are now 32 languages spoken in school. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium is above the national average. The school has undergone extensive development and is now on two adjacent sites.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness St Stephen's as a Church of England school are good

- This is a harmonious, inclusive school where children from different cultures show respect for each other and work well together.
- The Christian values of reflectiveness, resourcefulness, resilience and responsibility make a strong contribution to the learning, relationships and behaviour of the children enabling them to flourish and grow in confidence.
- The school provides a dynamic, creative environment and curriculum which give the children an enthusiasm for learning and enable them to make good progress.
- The strong links with the church and the support of parents help to embed the school into the local community.

Areas to improve

- Further enrich pupils' spiritual development by making Christian values more explicit and by providing interactive spaces in all classrooms for pupils to reflect, to ask questions and to explore spiritual issues.
- Increase opportunities for children to plan and deliver collective worship.
- Ensure that appropriate feedback is given to pupils in religious education, and marking is consistently related to the RE lesson objectives so that children know the next steps in their learning and are able to improve their work.

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

This is a vibrant, multi-cultural school where children and staff get on well together. Christian values underpin all that the school does and a particular emphasis is put on the 4Rs, reflectiveness, resourcefulness, resilience and responsibility. These are in evidence throughout the school and make a significant contribution to children's spiritual development and their learning. Children freely talk about them and know when they have used them. There is room to develop other values such as hope, forgiveness and reverence to further enhance the Christian ethos of the school. One adult said, 'Christian values are expressed in service to others and an active commitment to the whole community', and the school and church work closely together to provide for the needs of their very mixed community and see commendable success. This is a community which 'is very aware of faith' and some Muslim parents choose the school because it is faith-based. Children show a great deal of respect for each other and for the beliefs of others and as such exhibit an exemplary acceptance of diversity. One parent when discussing how the school dealt with difficult current affairs said, 'they are brave in their teaching' because staff are prepared to address complex issues with sensitivity. Children respond to local, national and international needs by raising funds for a number of charities. The school provides an environment where children are nurtured, where confidence is built and 'where trust replaces anxiety'. The Christian ethos is evident in the support given to ensure children achieve their full potential. Families with attendance issues are helped by the team responsible for supporting families. Some families are helped to integrate through the FAST project (Families and Schools Together). This encourages whole families to come into school, cook meals for each other, spend time together and then take responsibility for new families joining the school the following year. The strong emphasis on creativity throughout the school is faith-based. 'God is a creative God and therefore creativity is encouraged' both through the exciting internal and external environment and in the curriculum itself. This results in children making very good progress from Reception to Year 6. Children are offered a range of opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. A strong example of this is the iChallenge Booklets which every child is given. These suggest a variety of challenges, many of which take place outdoors, and cover a range of skills such as teamwork, enquiry, overcoming fear and problem solving. Along with the annual residential for all Key Stage 2 children, these also offer opportunities for awe and wonder as children engage with the natural world. Spiritual development is further encouraged in collective worship and religious education and many cross-curricular subjects. The school has some reflective spaces but spirituality could be further encouraged by developing spaces in all classrooms where children can pause to reflect and offer their personal responses to spiritual issues. Children are offered a variety of after-school clubs including sports and music clubs, ICT and the Rock club which has a Christian focus and is organised by volunteers from the church. They are given opportunities to take on responsibilities, for instance through the School Council, as peer mediators and as sports leaders. Behaviour in school is very good and relationships are strong and these link to the underpinning Christian values where children are taught to respect all members of the school community. Indeed a real strength of the school is the children's understanding of different faiths and their recognition of diversity as a positive element of school life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils enjoy collective worship and all members of the school community see it as an important element of the school's identity. Due to the restrictions of the buildings, there are different acts of worship each day. The whole school is only able to worship together in the church so these occasions are seen as particularly special. Children take an active role in these celebrations and services which are very well supported by the parents. Those from different faiths say they feel very welcome and enjoy their visits to the church. Christmas, Easter and

Harvest are all celebrated there alongside other worship times. Children like to be involved in collective worship and regularly write and read prayers. They enjoy making contributions at the front in their sharing assemblies and being invited to participate by the worship leaders. They would, however, benefit from wider opportunities to take ownership of collective worship by planning, delivering and monitoring more than they do at the moment. Children understand the value of prayer and its significance to believers. They gave examples of how they personally pray when someone is ill and how prayer is 'a time of silence when you think about God and it makes you feel better and respect others'. One child said, 'It makes you selfless not selfish.' In an observed act of worship, children concluded their prayers with Amen or Ameen according to their personal faith. They sang heartily and enjoyed the parable of The Lost Coin and made links to the character of God who reaches out to everyone and offers his love to all. Children have a good understanding of Christian traditions though more opportunities could be taken to increase their understanding of Anglican practices. Collective worship is planned by the co-ordinator in liaison with the deputy head and the vicar. It is based around specific themes, biblical teaching and relevant current events and includes celebrations and festivals from other faiths. Christian values underpin acts of worship but they are accessible to children whatever their faith background and everyone feels included and able to participate. They understand that what they learn in collective worship can affect their lives. One child said that after hearing that they should not exclude people from their games he made a conscious effort to play with someone who was alone. Another child said that after a focus on honesty she wanted people to be honest with her about her work so that she could improve it. Some monitoring of collective worship takes place and this needs to feed into school improvement planning to ensure that quality is continually at the forefront of provision.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children make good progress in RE and from low entry levels the majority of children are in line or above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2. Religious education has a high profile and where possible is integrated into the creative curriculum. For example, during the Autumn term much of the work was done through animation which was the theme for the term. Children are very positive about RE describing it as 'fun', 'interesting' and 'enjoyable' and they particularly like learning about other faiths. Their enthusiasm has been harnessed with visits to different places of worship which have helped to increase their understanding. Following their trip to the Sikhs' Gurdwara, one child instantly recalled the name of their holy book, Guru Granth Sahib and knew that Sikhs never turn their back on it. Another child who had visited a Jewish synagogue talked of the eternal flame that was always kept burning to show God is everlasting. These visits are enriching their understanding of others and contributing to their mature understanding of diversity. This begins in Reception where there is a cultural corner and parents bring in food from different cultures for children to share and is a thread running through all the year groups. In an outstanding RE lesson in Year 5, children were looking at ancient Baghdad where different religions were welcomed. From this starting point and following discussion, children used Venn diagrams to compare similarities and differences between Christianity, Islam and Judaism. They showed impressive understanding and using higher order skills, some children were able to produce concept maps linking what they had learnt to inclusion and British values. In a Year 1 class, children were looking at special people in their lives, helping them to see the importance of strong relationships. Assessment in RE has improved since the last inspection and shows individual progress and overall annual progress providing useful monitoring data. Marking in RE though is not yet consistent across school and there is not enough reference to RE objectives so that children can improve their work.

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

Leaders promote a Christian vision and they are very clear how this impacts on the children

and school life in general. Under the positive leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors are particularly sensitive to the needs of their community and strive hard to ensure that inclusion and respect for diversity are a central part of this vision. Consequently, all members of the community feel valued and part of the school family. The partnership between school and the parents is a real strength. They speak very enthusiastically about the school and they regularly come into a designated parents' room for coffee mornings and discussions. School has helped them to understand how they can best support their children and this has made a strong contribution to their children's progress. They are confident that school will address any issues and feel that their views are valued. They gave an example of how school had responded positively to their concerns about homework. They were also extremely positive about the school's links with the church and said their children often came home discussing what they had learnt. One parent cited the example of her child coming home and discussing the different names for Jesus in Christianity and Islam. The church provides strong spiritual and pastoral support and this mutually beneficial relationship reaches out to the community as a whole and helps children understand their place in it and in the wider world. The strong thread of creativity which runs throughout this dynamic school is promoted by all leaders and is central to the faith-based ethos of the school. They ensure that there is always a strong emphasis on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children. They recognise that the Christian values promoted by the school lead to good learning outcomes and to very good behaviour. Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school which is based on monitoring and evaluation. Whilst much of this is informal, there is now more incisive reporting to the governing body by the chair of governors who is regularly in school and has undertaken learning walks, work scrutiny and some observations with the RE and collective worship co-ordinator. This now needs to feed into the school improvement cycle to ensure ongoing development. Opportunities are taken to develop staff and governors and the networks with other schools all serve to raise awareness and ensure that the school moves forward and continues to meet the needs of the community to which it is so highly committed.

SIAMS report Jan 2015 St Stephen's Church of England VA School, Bradford BD5 7HU