

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Michael Syddall Church of England Primary School

Noels Court, Mowbray Road, Catterick Village, Richmond DL10 7LB

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Date of inspection	1 December 2016
Date of last inspection	18 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 121609
Headteacher	Alison McHarg
Inspector's name and number	Malcolm Price 627

School context

Michael Syddall Primary School is a smaller than average-sized school with 175 children on roll, of which 24 per cent are from service families. This means that mobility is a significant aspect of the school, with potential to impact on attainment, progress and outcomes. Pupils are mainly of white British heritage from a range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average. The school has recently experienced significant changes in staffing. The current headteacher was in post as acting headteacher at the time of the previous inspection. St Anne's Church is within walking distance of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Michael Syddall C of E Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The distinctive Christian character and nurturing ethos of the school are demonstrated through positive relationships and contribute strongly to children's good development, achievement and progress.
- The importance given to both collective worship and religious education (RE) supports this distinctiveness.
- School leaders have a clear vision for the school's future and work together to embed values such as respect, kindness, trust, forgiveness and friendship. These values are strongly supported by parents.

Areas to improve

- Create opportunities for all members of the school community, including children, to have greater involvement in monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship on the spiritual life of the school.
- Explore opportunities to welcome parents more frequently into collective worship in school.
- Help children to make better links between their understanding of the school's distinctive values, their own attitudes and actions, and their learning in RE.
- Seek ways to develop spaces around the school for prayer and reflection.

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

In the journey that this school is following, the development of its shared values is fundamental. The framework created jointly by staff, children and governors, and supported by parents, has resulted in a set of values that all members of the school community can relate to and which informs their daily activities and relationships. Children speak readily about values such as friendship and respect, and understand how they affect their relationships. They say that 'friends are like sisters and brothers', that 'everyone here gets on well' and that 'if someone is lonely, you can play with them'. This is mirrored by parents who say that children at the school look after each other. Children sometimes relate these values to Bible stories and, in this respect, they understand the values as being distinctively Christian. They refer to kindness within the Christmas story, explaining that 'the innkeeper was kind in lending the stable' and 'the wise men were kind in giving gifts, and then Jesus was kind to others in later life'. They also make connections with the parable of the Good Samaritan, saying that 'the other person thought he was an enemy but he still needed to be kind'. Creative displays in classrooms and around the school, such as the hands display illustrating that 'together we are a masterpiece', explicitly help children to remember shared values. The distinctive Christian character is also demonstrated through strong links with St Anne's Church and visits there for festivals and special occasions. Children understand that this is a church school. Both children and parents appreciate the links with the local church and speak positively about the contribution of the local vicar. Lessons are purposeful and children collaborate well and enjoy their learning. The school, through its distinctive character, is enabling children to make good progress personally and academically. Standards have risen so that, by the time children leave the school, they are mainly above national expectations. The school tracks and supports children from mobile service families and these children perform well in comparison with others. Leaders and class teachers meet to discuss and arrange targeted support for more vulnerable children whose progress and attainment is lower. The school's nurturing and inclusive environment has also led to an improvement in attendance, which is now in line with expectations.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is seen as an important part of each school day. Children respect it as a special time, listen carefully and sing sensitively. They participate well and sometimes help to lead the worship, for instance by reading prayers or helping to act out stories. They can explain the meaning of the Advent candles and enthusiastically discuss how they can find out more about Jesus' birth. Children can link the Christmas story to the school's distinctive Christian values, explaining that Jesus would be 'courageous' and 'kind to other people when he grows up'. Children are given space to reflect and are encouraged to join in responses. A cross and prayer book on the table at the front, along with a striking piece of stained glass, help children to focus on worship. The local vicar regularly leads worship and children appreciate her visits and recall the content. For example, they know that they celebrate Ash Wednesday 'to remember that Jesus died on a cross'. Children also visit the local church for special events, such as Christingle. These events are well attended by parents who say that sometimes children go home singing the songs. Parents are occasionally invited into collective worship in school though opportunities to do this could be offered more frequently. Collective worship is planned thematically, is closely linked to the school values and includes the major Christian festivals as well as the beliefs and festivals of other faiths. Children are given some responsibility for planning and some changes to the format of collective worship have been inspired by children's comments. Children are mature enough to take a more significant role in planning and leading times of worship. There is some evidence that school leaders are monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship. For instance, they are aware that children say that 'we're different after worship than before'. However, there is potential for widening the range of people who contribute in this way, including through more innovative and manageable ways of gathering responses and opinions. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship. Prayer and reflection are encouraged in other ways and at other times of the day, and leaders are aware that there is scope to develop reflection areas around the school, including as part of the existing secret garden. The school leaders and vicar are aware that the policy for collective worship, and specifically for worship in classrooms, needs to be embedded with new members of staff.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is given an important status and contributes well to children's learning. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and creative approaches. As a result, children are engaged and enjoy their lessons. Children are encouraged to ask big questions about religion and life, and parents say that they have a good understanding of Christianity as well as learning about other faiths, for instance through their activities about Diwali. In their lessons about the Christmas story, younger children can explain that Jesus is 'the light of the world' and that 'he was a

special baby'. They understand how they might give 'invisible gifts', suggesting that 'I would give Jesus my heart...because he is the Son of God'. Children are also able to consider how people in the Christmas story might have felt at the time. They are learning to relate these thoughts to the school's core values, such as hope and trust. Older children learn about Christianity through art and, through discussion, are able to explain that 'an icon is a picture with a meaning'. They can comment on the use of gold to associate Jesus with being a king and red 'to show how he died on a cross'. In their RE lessons, children write prayers and learn about the features of a church. They learn about forgiveness through looking at parables. However, they do not as yet always remember the Bible stories or parables they encounter nor associate them with their own attitudes and actions. There is every indication that standards in RE are in line with those in other core areas of learning and that teachers provide suitable developmental feedback to learners. Planning for RE is thorough, clearly focussed and related to the school's values. It strongly supports children's learning about spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The subject coordinator has established procedures for tracking and assessing progress in RE, although these are not yet at an individual pupil level. In her absence, and in the light of substantial changes in teaching staff, school leaders are rightly focussing on the embedding and improvement of these procedures and, in this way, are taking steps to meet the focus for development from the previous inspection.

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

All those in leadership express a common vision for the school based on its core values. They agree that the priorities for the school are not only in continuing to successfully raise standards but in nurturing the school's Christian character to enable all members of the school community to flourish. They are intentional about school improvement and rigorous in evaluation. Examples of this are the proactive steps taken to address inconsistencies in pupil progress and the high level of support for service children and families within the school community. With regard to service children, leaders promote the Syddall's Soldiers support group as part of the HMS Heroes initiative, and this is recognised as exemplary practice. Leaders are also rightly focussing on the induction and development of new staff. Governors now have a more structured approach to monitoring, with some being linked to key areas of learning and school life, showing that the previous focus for development is being met. The partnership between the school and local church is strong and mutually beneficial. The vicar and foundation governors are actively involved in school life, for instance through supporting collective worship. Children learn about other Christian traditions through visits to Ripon Cathedral and visitors from other local churches. School leaders value children's opinions and believe that 'they are the driving force in any decision'. For example, children are encouraged in their leadership roles through the school council and this is evident in the responsibility given to them for spending a recent MOD grant. Leaders promote children's awareness of shared British values and children speak about their understanding of individual liberty. They also help children to experience other faiths, for instance through visiting a Hindu temple. They encourage children to participate in charitable activities such as the Samaritan's Purse shoebox appeal, Children in Need and a local food bank. Children gain a good insight into global issues, as shown by the school's response to Cyclone Winston which affected families within the school community. Through strong leadership, this school has made great strides and it is clear to see why a parent would say that 'this school is brilliant'.

SIAMS report December 2016 Michael Syddall C of E Primary School, Catterick DL10 7LB