

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Shincliffe Church of England Primary School

Beal Walk, High Shincliffe, County Durham. DH1 2PN

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Durham
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local Authority	Durham
Date of inspection	15 March 2018
Date of last inspection	21 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 114229
Headteacher	David Tait
Inspector's name and number	Mary Cook 811

School context

Shincliffe is an oversubscribed, average sized primary school in a semi-rural setting. The vast majority of pupils come from a white British background. The percentage of children with special educational needs is below the national average as are the numbers eligible for free school meals. There are close links with the parish of St. Mary's in Shincliffe. The senior leadership team and the chair of the governing body have changed since the last inspection, but have been in post for more than three years. The headteacher currently supports the leadership of a neighbouring junior school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shincliffe as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school is led by a senior leadership team and governing body whose members are passionately committed to a deeply Christian ethos and promote a vision rooted in Christian values.
- The distinctive Christian character makes a significant contribution to the children's personal development, wellbeing and academic achievement.
- The well-established relationship between the parish church and other Christian denominations contributes significantly to the values and practice such as worship within the school.
- Collective worship, religious education (RE) and international projects contribute to the children's excellent understanding of world affairs.

Areas to improve

- Explore the ways in which the children's spirituality can be further developed in all aspects of school life so that they can reflect on the interconnectedness of life and faith.
- Extend the children's understanding of the United Kingdom so that they know more about the diverse nature of society and the contribution made by the local region.

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

Shincliffe Church of England Primary School's outstanding commitment to Christian values such as hope, justice and humility is clearly evident in the life of the school, notably in collective worship and RE. The school's vision is founded in the belief that every member of the school community is valued as a child of God, made in his image and likeness. The expectation is that all will be given every opportunity to flourish in both personal and academic fields. Attainment of the pupils is above the national average at the end of Foundation Stage, throughout school and at the end of Key Stage 2. Most pupils make good progress in reading and expected progress in mathematics and writing. The school attributes this to the Christian values of wisdom and endurance as the pupils are very much committed to aiming high and succeeding in their studies. Attendance is higher than the national average and this demonstrates high levels of pupil enjoyment and engagement with their learning.

This spirit of justice and a determination for equality is palpable. One child explains this well: 'Justice means the most to us, as justice means everyone has the same in the world, that everyone is equal and because it is not, that is why it is so important.' The high quality discussions between staff and pupils, exploring the concept of justice, leads to concerted actions to make a difference. The effort one child is making to support Sports Relief, by organising his friends and passing on fund raising ideas, is just one example out of many. All the Year 6 pupils express God's love to the younger pupils in school, by enthusiastically assisting them at lunchtimes, providing play and reading buddies.

The emphasis on the life and teachings of Jesus, offers a moral compass for the pupils to live by, which directly results in excellent relationships within school and exemplary behaviour in class. There are few instances of bullying and the pupils are confident that if they report an issue it will be dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner.

As a result of outstanding teaching and learning in RE, the pupils are very aware of the six major world faiths. Many are highly confident and articulate in expressing their own faith. 'I am a Christian, and it makes me happy that I know Jesus died to forgive our human sins in the world,' is the view expressed by one pupil. However, another pupil states: 'I like Islam, I am a Muslim. Learning about other faiths helps us to respect other people.' The teaching of RE has deepened the pupils' understanding of faith and why it is of great importance to some, and less important to others. Individual spiritual development is encouraged in RE and through prayer, but less so across the other curriculum areas. This inhibits the pupils from fully expressing their awe and wonder about creation, and recognising spiritual moments when they occur.

The school uses the proximity of Durham Cathedral to good effect, drawing on visits to learn more about Christian creativity (the complexity of the design and workmanship in the building) and the Northern Saints. The pupils have an excellent understanding of the local area. The international project, 'Christmas Wishes,' celebrates the diverse ways in which 39 countries remember Jesus' birth, adding to the pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. The global education, built up over many years, enhances the pupils' world view and their understanding of the way in which actions in one country can impact of the lives of those living in another. However, an understanding of the United Kingdom, is less well developed, which causes some confusion for the pupils when defining their regional identity.

Pupil voice is highly regarded and leads to active campaigns which serve for the good of all the community, such as the fundraising for a defibrillator in the village, another example of God's love in action.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship makes an excellent contribution to the school's ethos, to the expression of its values such as love, compassion and service, and to the development of learners and adults. The pupils have an excellent knowledge of stories from the Bible and can relate these to everyday life. This is because of the close working relationship between the school, the clergy and congregation of St Mary's Church and leaders from other Christian denominations such as the Methodist Education Officer. The headteacher has a key role in determining the theological basis to worship and communicating with all the people on the worship rota. This includes feedback to leaders on the style and content of worship to ensure that all maintain the high standards set and fully engage with the pupils. Worship leaders feel fully informed of expectations and have improved their practice to ensure the younger pupils understand the worship themes and concepts. The pupils enjoy acting out Bible stories and are able to re-tell many and relate to key characters as a result. The different life experiences of those leading worship contributes to a rich tapestry of provision, drawing on their knowledge of living in developing countries and closer to home. This fosters a greater understanding and empathy between the pupils and those living a completely different culture. Stories shared by Christian Aid about children growing up in war-torn Syria have had a profound effect in generating both thankfulness and generosity towards others. Many of the pupils are contributing to Christian Aid by raising funds and donating pocket money.

The pupils are confident in talking about the concept of the Holy Trinity explaining: 'God who is in heaven, sent Jesus his son to be with us and then die for us and the Holy Spirit came to earth so that we are not alone.'

The parish priest, local congregation and school work together to celebrate major festivals such as the Harvest in church. The school warmly reciprocates, hosting Easter events and the Remembrance service in school. The latter a very moving occasion reminding pupils, staff and family members of the need for peace in the world. The older pupils readily prepare materials for Christmas worship and have a role in Holy Communion, helping with readings and prayers. Many of the Year 6 pupils are confirmed before leaving school. This is a school where prayer is important and as such, the school day is punctuated with the invitation to pray during worship and at other times. This is highly valued by the pupils who especially like their own prayer to be chosen to be shared with the class. Pupils and parents talk animatedly about the recent whole school prayer space development. This is a chance for all to pray using interactive resources. The mix of fun and poignant activities provide an opportunity to think more deeply and to reflect on God's creation, leading to thoughts of thankfulness for God's generosity. The pupils monitor the impact of worship and contribute their ideas for change through the worship group. As a result of the desire for more interactive prayer spaces, the worship group takes responsibility for furnishing the classroom with prayer resources such as paper leaves for the school prayer tree. The prayer spaces are well used and have contributed significantly to the pupils' expression of spirituality as they are genuinely interested in and have respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values. There are opportunities for parents, families, members of the parish church and governors to share worship and all speak appreciatively of these occasions as they are reminded that they are part of God's family. The cascading of God's love is a powerful influence in the school community and generates confident individuals who strive to achieve their best in showing God's love to one another.

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

The Christian values of love, hope and thankfulness are at the heart of this school. Leaders live out these values with earnest intent, ensuring robust self-evaluation and continual improvement; this extends to improving governance and strengthening the knowledge and understanding of individual governors through training. There is a deep understanding of the Church of England's vision for education, and the supplementary materials such as 'Valuing All God's Children'. This has led to staff training and pupil guidance on bullying in all its forms, significantly reducing incidents over time.

The headteacher is adamant that: 'by your deeds you shall know them,' referring to the message from St Matthew's Gospel that encourages Christians to take positive actions. As such, he devotes a significant amount of time helping parents understand the Christian values, which underpin the ethos of the school. The regular newsletters outlining the worship themes provide the theological basis for the term's theme, such as endurance. Parents and pupils complete fun challenges, such as quizzes, about the value. This has lasting impact as the family members collectively grow in understanding, and can discuss the values together. Parents are very appreciative of the work undertaken to ensure spiritual development both of themselves and their children. Parents are also supportive of and involved in school life. They speak very positively of the care and support given to their children and value the Christian aspects of the school.

There is a clear understanding of the need to develop future church school leaders. The headteacher feels it is his responsibility to nurture and mentor leaders. Shincliffe lives out Christian service in the local community in continuing to provide leadership support for another school. This joint working has been hugely beneficial in providing an opportunity for the deputy headteacher to assume greater leadership responsibilities. This has increased his confidence, and in turn, given the middle leaders the chance to expand their roles as future leaders of church schools.

Governors are well-informed through monitoring visits, looking at pupils' work and formal feedback from leaders at all levels including the RE subject leader. The links between school and various churches are of the highest quality, with strong relationships leading to a flourishing partnership. The school fully meets the statutory requirements for both collective worship and RE. The decision taken to include teaching about the six major world faiths in the curriculum has helped the children develop a wider world view. They are well prepared for life in a multi-faith society. Since the last inspection there has been considerable progress in addressing all development points, particularly the systematic approach to evaluating worship.

SIAMS report March 2018, Shincliffe CE Primary School, Beal Walk, High Shincliffe, Durham DH1 62PN