

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Richard Taylor Church of England Primary School | |
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| Bilton Lane, Harrogate HG1 3DT | |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | Leeds |
| Previous SIAS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Date of academy conversion | 4 March 2015 |
| Date of inspection | 10 October 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | 13 December 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Primary Academy 141722 |
| Headteacher | Andrew Symonds |
| Inspector's name and number | Malcolm Price 627 |

School context

Richard Taylor School is an average sized primary school on the north eastern side of Harrogate. It serves a mixed catchment area, with a significant proportion of children attending from outside this area. It is popular and over-subscribed. There are currently 274 children on roll in nine classes. Children are predominantly from white British backgrounds, although there are increasing numbers of children with an eastern European heritage. The school has also seen a rise in children with additional needs. The headteacher was in post at the time of the previous inspection. There is a long-standing, mutually supportive relationship with the nearby parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Richard Taylor Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian character and caring ethos of the school are demonstrated in exemplary relationships and a strong focus on shared values, which include trust, peace, forgiveness and service.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) both support this distinctiveness, offering opportunities for children to participate, engage and develop spiritually.
- School leaders provide a nurturing environment based on Christian values. This is enabling children to thrive personally, enjoy school life, achieve well and make very good progress academically.

Areas to improve

- Enable children to have a greater role in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship, including through further development of the worship ambassador team.
- Introduce and embed a revised scheme of work for RE, taking account of new guidance in relation to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Develop a more reflective approach to feedback to pupils in RE, for example through the use of questions and prompts in marking, in order to encourage higher level thinking skills.

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

Everything about this school suggests a happy, positive and thriving environment based on Christian principles that are understood and expressed by the whole school community. As a result, relationships are of the highest quality and children are growing up in a context where, in the words of the mission statement, they understand that they 'are loved by God'. Children have played a key role recently in discussing and agreeing the nine core Christian values, such as trust, peace, forgiveness and service. They explain that these are 'values that Jesus taught and we want to live by' and that 'we are a church school and some values have developed from the Bible'. Where values do not initially appear to be distinctively Christian, children can justify their inclusion. For instance, they say that 'the reason we chose sportsmanship is that it helps us to develop other values that are in it'. The values are highly visible in displays around the school and are consistently referred to in lessons by both teachers and children. Parents say that children know and can explain the values and that 'they demonstrate this in their behaviour'. They also say that the school culture raises children's confidence, especially for those with additional needs.

The impact of the distinctive Christian character is evident in the way children treat each other with respect and how older children look after younger ones in school family groups. As one child stated, 'we learn about different stories from the Bible, and as we learn and understand, we start to try to be a better person like in the story.' Another child related how 'the feeding of the five thousand inspired me to help others'. Children can explain that the cross on the school logo represents Jesus dying on the cross and that it includes a 'shield to know that God protects us'.

The Christian character is lived out daily through regular prayers, the use of reflective areas in classrooms, and through the leaves on the values tree where children's actions and achievements are recognised by others. Children are proud of their Peace Garden but would like to see it redeveloped. They appreciate the joint activities and strong links with St John's Church and other local churches. Both they and their parents enjoy their visits to the parish church for festivals and children remember and look forward to visits from a wide range of local clergy. There is no doubt that the school has met the development focus from the previous inspection to review its Christian values. In terms of academic development, on almost all indicators pupil attainment is above national expectations. Where there are any minor concerns, such as recently in some aspects of reading, the school, through its distinctive character, has taken decisive action such as through early day interventions and investment in targeted resources. As a result, progress measures are all positive.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

In this school, collective worship in a variety of formats is a significant event in each day. Not only do children and adults speak of worship as a stimulating activity, but it is also one of the main ways in which the school's distinctive Christian values are embedded and celebrated. For instance, children are learning about how the value of responsibility affects them. This approach is clearly having a positive impact on children in terms of their attitudes and behaviour, which are admirable. Through engaging presentation, they are able to relate to the gospel story of James and John, to understand how Jesus gave responsibility to his disciples, and to reflect on how they themselves serve in different roles within the school community. Worship promotes children's spiritual development. It includes times of reflection and children respond thoughtfully to questions. They listen very well and are able to recall Bible stories, such as Jesus washing his disciples' feet, and make links to what they are being asked to think about.

Artefacts on a table at the front are used as symbols to enhance worship. Children are able to explain the significance of the Trinity and this is illustrated by the lighting of a triple candle. They enjoy worship songs and sometimes use traditional responses. They know the Lord's Prayer and their own school prayer by heart. The school has taken steps to meet the development focus from the previous inspection to 'increase opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate their own collective worship'. The worship ambassador team has been created and given a role within planning. The worship ambassadors also help to set up collective worship and note down their thoughts as an evaluation in a special book. This adds to the monitoring already carried out by adults, including governors and clergy. Children enjoy helping to lead, for example by acting out the story of James and John, and each class takes a turn in leading worship. Children say that they would like more opportunities to contribute to planning and leading and their mature attitudes suggest that they would respond capably to this. Collective worship is very well supported by visitors from a wide range of local churches, enabling children to experience their input on a weekly basis.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children have positive attitudes towards RE and are comfortable talking about their learning. They are able to think about the significance and meaning of what they learn and, through well planned lessons, teachers encourage them to engage in important issues, often related to the school's distinctive values. For example, children discussing the story of Jonah are able to explain not only the key message but also how it relates to their own lives. They say that 'God gave Jonah a second chance' and so 'we can give other people a second chance'. They know that this relates to forgiveness and that 'everyone should learn from what they've done wrong and be a better person'. Children have good knowledge of stories and parables from the Bible and can often connect these with the school values. They can recall the parable of the ten lepers and understand that this is about thankfulness. They are able to speak about the role of trust in terms of Noah's relationship with God and also in the parable of the talents. In this way, children are becoming increasingly aware of how the Bible relates to their own lives. Teachers help children to tackle big questions. For example, when following a theme of justice, children can see how stories from both Christianity and Judaism can teach them about fairness. They also learn how in the Bible everyday items, such as bread and rocks, can be seen as metaphors enabling them to make connections with important events, for example the Last Supper. Teachers help children to learn about a range of other faiths and opportunities are taken to help children gain a deeper understanding, such as when learning about the muslim hijab and how sometimes a person's faith can be recognised in the way they appear. It is clear that RE is given a high status and is creating opportunities for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, standards are at least as good, and at times better, than in other areas of the curriculum. The subject coordinator has a clear grasp of the strengths of RE and the areas that could be developed. The scheme of work is thoroughly planned and teachers have received training and advice where needed. Assessment of RE is well-managed and all teachers regularly contribute to assessment books. This supports the impression that children are making good progress. Teachers give feedback to children praising the quality of the work. However, there is as yet little evidence of teachers using reflective feedback and questioning to draw out more mature responses from pupils. There are plans to phase in the 'Understanding Christianity' scheme and teachers are aware that this will present a challenge in terms of revising their approach to planning and assessment.

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

The success of Richard Taylor School, as a church school, is in no small part due to the effectiveness of its leaders as a committed and unified team. They have a clear understanding of how to shape the school's Christian character and their self-evaluation is accurate in terms of strengths and areas for development. The strong and supportive leadership is consistently praised by parents, and new members of staff comment on the caring Christian culture and how 'the headteacher reflects the Christian values'. The result of this leadership is that children are gaining the greatest benefit from school life. Governors are actively involved, for example by meeting with partner classes and with the school council. Foundation governors are involved in monitoring collective worship. Clergy from a number of local churches, including the Methodist church and Gospel Hall, support the school by leading collective worship and visiting classes. The relationship with St John's and St Luke's churches is particularly strong and has included a collaborative approach to developing the school values. Members from churches are involved in school life, for instance through the harvest community tea, which is supported by older children. Children are encouraged to take on leadership roles, for example through the school council and the worship ambassador team. Leaders help children to develop a wider perspective on the world through links with Shanghai and Dubai, and also to appreciate those less fortunate than themselves by fundraising for a range of charities and through Fairtrade fortnight. They are also helping children to learn more about diversity and to understand those of other faiths and cultures through their studies in RE and through a range of visits to places of worship, including a gurdwara and a mosque. The work of the school is well supported by parents, including through the parent prayer group. School leaders are aware that there is some work to be done in rationalising the various mission statements and aims in order to achieve a more coherent approach. However, there is no doubt that in practice the school is achieving its mission to create 'a place where all children find friendship, have responsibility, make progress and are loved by God'.