

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Norton Free Church of England Primary School	
Matthews Lane, Norton, Sheffield S8 8JS	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Sheffield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Sheffield
Date of inspection	14 November 2016
Date of last inspection	1 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	107106
Headteacher	Hazel Bell
Inspector's name and number	Malcolm Price 627

School context

Norton Free Primary School is an average sized school with 213 children on roll occupying a modern building set in attractive grounds. Pupils are mainly of white British heritage from a wide range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average. The school is popular and oversubscribed. The school has recently experienced significant changes in leadership, including a period of executive and acting headships. The current headteacher was not in this post at the time of the previous inspection. St James Church is within walking distance of the school.

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

- The distinctive Christian character and nurturing, family ethos of the school are demonstrated through very good relationships and contribute strongly to children's development, achievement and progress.
- Collective worship is inclusive and supports this distinctiveness.
- School leaders have a clear vision and work together to promote and cultivate the school's values.

Areas to improve

- Revisit the existing school values to gain a shared understanding of how they can more clearly represent and enhance the Christian character of the school.
- Revise the programme and format of collective worship so that its spiritual content is more embedded.
- 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 ways to develop spaces around the school for prayer and reflection.

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

It is no surprise that parents describe this school as 'nurturing' and a place where 'I know my child is safe and happy'. Indeed, children say that 'all teachers are caring'. This is in part due to the values that all members of the school community share – values such as perseverance, which is emphasised through a wide range of sports and the mile-a-day initiative. Children understand these shared values and can sometimes relate them to Bible stories they know. For example, they can explain that the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches them to treat everyone equally, even when they are different. They can also explain how Jesus' feeding of the five thousand teaches them about caring for others. As yet these shared values do not fully express the Christian character of the school, even though this character is supported and encouraged by all those in leadership. Children are polite, welcoming and behave well, showing through their attitudes to each other that they understand the benefits of cooperation. 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. By the time they leave the school, most children are achieving in line with or above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. A number of younger children with significant challenges, and who may not meet national expectations, are being monitored and supported, including through workshops for parents. Religious education (RE) contributes significantly to children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and is closely linked to the school values. For instance, children learn about the similarities of worship in different faiths and can connect this with the themes of cooperation and respect. Displays in each classroom relating to RE learning help children to remember key ideas and displays around the school are accompanied by Bible verses. The distinctive Christian character is also demonstrated through prayers during the day and through visits to the local church for festivals and special occasions, such as Christingle and the leavers' service. Children appreciate the links with the local church and comment that 'it's our school church'. They describe how the vicar 'tells us stories about God and Jesus'. However, whilst children recognise the school as a church school, they are not always able to articulate the impact this has on their spiritual and moral development. They know the school prayer and some children can explain how their class prayer was created. There is scope to develop prayer spaces and reflective areas in classrooms and elsewhere.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship, in a range of formats, is valued and forms an important part of each school day. Children respect it as a special time, listen carefully and participate well. They sing confidently and know prayers and responses by heart. They can explain that a candle is lit to show that 'this is a church school' and 'it helps us to focus on God'. They can also explain the significance of the cross on the table at the front and the meaning of the display about the Trinity. Children are given space to reflect, for instance on the theme of remembrance day, and to discuss their thoughts. Younger children are encouraged and praised by others for their contributions. The local vicar regularly leads worship and children appreciate his visits. Collective worship is planned in themes 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 participating in worship though they are mature enough to take on a greater role. Parents are encouraged to attend and they enjoy their visits, especially when children's achievements are being celebrated. Children respond well to the emphasis on achievement though this is sometimes at the expense of a clearer focus on the spiritual aspects of worship. For instance, children do not as yet readily remember Bible stories that they have heard during collective worship nor do they relate their experience of worship to their own attitudes and behaviours. There is some evidence that collective worship is monitored and evaluated, particularly by the coordinator through observation and discussion with colleagues. Children are encouraged to post feedback about their favourite parts of worship, as well as about what they have learnt, in a special box. There is potential for widening the range of people who contribute in this way and for creating more innovative and manageable methods in order to fully meet the focus for development from the previous inspection to evaluate the impact of worship on children's

attitudes and on the school community generally. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship.

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

The headteacher, school leadership team and governors express a common vision for the school based on shared values. Following a period of instability and significant changes in leadership, they have maintained and strengthened the school's Christian identity and are now working hard together to embed this and to ensure that the new leadership team is functioning well. Leaders are aware of some inconsistencies in pupil progress and are proactive in taking steps to address this. They agree that the priorities for the school are not only in maintaining and raising standards but in nurturing the school's Christian character to enable all members of the school community to flourish. This is indicated, for example, in their plans to redevelop the Peace Garden. The partnership between the school and local church is strong. The vicar and other church members are actively involved in school life, for instance through the special book given to school starters and through supporting each other's activities. Leaders promote children's wider understanding of Christianity through links with the cathedral and the Oakes Christian Activity Centre. They also help children to experience other faiths through visits to a mosque, through Indian dance and through learning about Divali. Children are encouraged in their leadership roles through the school and eco councils. The impact of the school council is demonstrated by their successful application for a grant for art materials. Sports ambassadors take their role seriously in helping other children to become involved and in training new leaders. School leaders encourage children to participate in local events such as the Herd of Sheffield and to support charitable causes including the British Heart Foundation and the shoebox appeal. Children gain an excellent insight into global issues, particularly through the links with Chebonnet school in Kenya and with children in Malawi. The focus area from the previous inspection to help children appreciate other cultures and belief systems has clearly been met.

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