

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

East Morton Church of England Primary School

Street Lane, East Morton, Keighley, BD20 5SE	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Bradford
Date of inspection	10 February 2017
Date of last inspection	January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 107311
Headteacher	Kathryn Savage
Inspector's name and number	Nigel Castledine 652

School context

This is an averaged size Church of England primary school serving a small local mainly White British semi-rural community on the edges of the Bradford conurbation. There is a growing proportion of pupils from ethnic-minority families, mainly of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special education needs or disability is around the national average.

The headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers have been appointed since the last inspection. There have also been significant changes in the staff team, including senior posts with particular teaching responsibilities.

The parish is currently without a vicar.

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

- This school celebrates the unique God-given value of each individual pupil, and ensures that all are supported to achieve the best possible educational outcomes in a distinctly Christian learning environment.
- The pervasive Christian values of the school provide a shared language of faith that is understood and valued by the whole school community.
- The inspirational headteacher's vision for the school has enabled distributed leadership to enrich and extend the learning experiences and nurture given to every child, so significantly raising academic aspirations.
- Mutually supportive relationships, modelled by the staff for the pupils, ensure that there is a welcoming acceptance of each person as an individual, irrespective of age, belief or culture.

Areas to improve

- Use the school's mix of faiths and cultures, alongside those of other contrasting schools, to provide pupils with appropriate learning experiences that extend and develop their perceptions of belief and lifestyle.
- Extend the remit of the pupils' worship council to use their skills and enthusiasm within weekly class and key stage worship.

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

In this inclusive, faith-centred learning community, gospel values are at its heart, with every decision, action and interaction being made from a Christian perspective. The school's broad, balanced and creative curriculum is enriched by its fifteen core Christian values: trust, love, hope, forgiveness, wisdom, peace, creation, thankfulness, honesty, service, patience, humility, compassion, reverence and koinonia. A Christian value is celebrated as each half-term's faith focus. The strength of this approach can be seen in the recent exploration of koinonia. Because the concept of belonging to a caring community was fully explored in worship and religious education (RE), all were able to consider their contribution to koinonia. RE learning also enables pupils to learn how the principles of the gospel values of the school are to be found in the teachings and scriptures of other world faiths. This builds an inclusiveness of approach for those of faiths other than Christianity. Classroom prayer areas provide strong visual reminders that support the pupils in this exploration through quiet reflection.

The school's extensive use of the Philosophy for Children approach enriches exploration of belief and enables pupils to consider the big questions of life and religion in meaningful ways. An older girl observed, 'God is a light in the darkness, and he gives us hope.' It also provides many opportunities for those of no religious faith to explore their beliefs in a structured way.

The importance shown to spiritual, moral, cultural and social education is clear within the diverse curriculum that embraces the arts and enables pupils to develop a personal sense of morality. There is time for reflection, awe and wonder, and the development of pupils' higher order thinking skills in spiritual experiences that challenge and inspire. A Year 6 child wrote, 'God's dream for me is to be kind and caring, so I am the best person I can be.'

From an average or above starting point, pupils make good sustained academic progress, with the learning mentor ensuring potential blocks to learning are removed. By the end of Year 6, most pupils reach or exceed national academic expectations. This level has been sustained despite expectations being lifted by the revised National Curriculum and assessment procedures. A small number of more vulnerable pupils learn well but at levels below national expectations. As a result, pupils enjoy their academic success and want to be in school, ensuring attendance data remains above national expectations. Any persistent absence is carefully monitored and followed up by the learning mentor and senior staff.

The staff are highly effective role models for the pupils in their support and consideration for the needs of others. Pupils follow their example by showing each other universal courtesy and respect which they can readily relate to their faith's values. A Year 6 pupil explained, 'Teachers share values with us, and they all listen to our points of view.' Pupils are very keen to follow their beliefs and be of service to others, and readily take on positions of responsibility from an early age. The school's behavioural policy ensures that faith-driven principles inspire pupils to think about the consequences of their behaviour and to say sorry and forgive. A Year 2 pupil explained, 'God still loves us if we do things wrong.' Bullying is a rare occurrence and is dealt with compassionately and swiftly.

Global understanding of multi-cultural Christianity develops from opportunities for pupils to contrast their learning about the UK with differing countries, and cultures. Pupils grow in respect for other world faiths and differing lifestyles through their interaction and discussion with their peers within school. However, they do not have the wider experiences that can be gained from other contrasting communities. Faith and concern inspire pupils to show deep compassion for the needs of others through their support for local, national and international charities.

Pupils regard RE as one of the highlights of each week's learning. The use of big books for recording outcomes emphasises RE's cross-curricular approach and celebrates its wide range of learning experiences. Because RE enables pupils to explore the links between the teachings of major world faiths and the school's Christian values, the subject also enriches and strengthens the impact of worship for all pupils.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is the key strength that lies at the heart of school life, influencing the thinking and actions of the school community. Whilst inclusive in its consideration of all the faiths of the school community and the needs of those of no faith, it is firmly linked to a wide range of biblical texts. These anchor Christian values in the teachings of Jesus and link them into pupils' lives. Following the last inspection, the school has reinvigorated the presentation and organisation of worship. A major successful innovation has been the setting up of the influential multi-faith pupils' worship council that is now responsible for planning and delivering increasingly independent acts of whole-school worship. Pupils benefit from their focused engagement with worship led by their peers, one Year 5 boy stating, 'When children lead worship, their ideas make me really think about what God wants me to do.'

Senior staff are responsible for worship themes, ensuring all who lead worship receive feedback and support for areas to develop. New members of staff have particularly benefited from this approach. Worship council members, staff, foundation governors and the clergy all evaluate the impact of worship, which informs future plans.

A specially designed table provides a worship focal point with its coloured cloths that aid the pupils' awareness of

the Anglican liturgical calendar. Its carved wooden cross is a reminder of the faith and history of the village community. Pupils explained that the three candles on the worship table were there to remind Christians of how God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together as the 'Trinity team' in their lives. This age-appropriate understanding of the Trinity is clear from Year 1 upwards. Anglican traditions are experienced in the worship songs, the responses of worship and in the prayers which include the Lord's Prayer and the Peace. Alongside well-known prayers are those of pupils, often in the form of teaspoon prayers, a simple formula that reminds the user of the essential elements of prayer. A member of the worship council said, 'I know God listens to my prayers and that makes me feel peace.' Each classroom has a well-used prayer tree for shared prayer plus small 'private' prayer folders which were explained by a Year 3 girl as the place to put prayers 'for only God to see'. The strength of prayer and faith was very apparent in how the school community coped with the tragic death of a pupil. The inevitable sadness and longer-term feelings were sensitively supported by the vicar and members of the Bradford-based Zephaniah Trust.

School worship also takes place in St Luke's church at the major festivals of the Christian year. These services are very well attended by parents and families of all faiths in the local community, and are led by the pupils and the school choir.

Another successful school worship innovation has been the seating of older pupils alongside younger, in order to support the discussion and involvement in worship topics for the younger worshippers. Staff also model this involvement, with one teacher, new to the school, observing, 'As staff we are there to worship, and this includes us discussing, reflecting and praying too.' A termly staff eucharist takes place in school, which joins the adult team together in worship and reflection.

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

The headteacher has used exceptional leadership skills in developing the school's pervasive Christian ethos which provides strong, inclusive faith foundations for the highest standards of pupils' education and nurture. Her school leadership team has worked tirelessly with her to bring to life the school's motto, 'Everyone, every chance, every day'. This is supported by the emphasis given to pupils' spiritual, emotional and social development to underpin academic success. This work harnesses the school's Christian ethos to drive improvement priorities, with Christian values, RE and worship all being key areas that are led by highly experienced practitioners, including members of the senior leadership team. The governing board has an essential role in school leadership, evaluating and holding senior leaders to account for the effectiveness of the school's Christian distinctiveness on the standards of pupil nurture and academic achievement.

The school's continuing professional development is geared to ensuring that all staff and governors benefit from appropriate courses and development opportunities. This approach has significantly supported succession planning within school. The school also works closely within the Airedale schools' learning community and has given significant strategic leadership support to local schools in difficulty. Links with the diocese are increasing, particularly with the Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust, and through diocesan training events. The advisory visits of the diocesan education officer to the school are highly valued.

A particular strength of leadership has been the emphasis given to developing pupils' spirituality through inspirational events such as the visit of the Singing Children of Africa and the Refugee Voices drama project. These events were spiritual highlights for both pupils and staff, with their significance in faith terms still resonating in the school. Other stimuli within school are provided by regular volunteer visits from the Zephaniah trust, a local Christian charity.

Mutually supportive links exist with the local community, with events regularly supported by pupils and their families. The congregation of St Luke's church welcomes pupils and parents for festive services as well as to weekly church events. Church governor representatives keep the congregation well informed about school life, and the widely-distributed school magazine also features news of community and school events. All these links help to ensure that the rich inclusivity and strong Christian distinctiveness of the school is well known and celebrated by the whole community.

Parents are welcomed into school at any time and they appreciate the care and attention given by staff when help or advice is needed. They are kept well informed about their children's progress. Parent questionnaires give a very positive view that confirms this level of support is valued. They also show that the inclusive faith life of the school is regarded by many parents as having a beneficial impact on their children with one mother sharing her view, 'The care and love that enriches my child's education comes from the Christian faith that fills this school'.