

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Address	Mowbray Terrace West Tanfield Ripon HG4 5JN		
Date of inspection	28 November 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Controlled Primary
Diocese	Leeds	URN	121524

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Ineffective
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Ineffective

School context

St Nicholas' is a primary school with 35 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above national averages. The school was judged good by Ofsted in March 2019. Since restructuring in 2018, pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. It has been in a collaborative partnership with a neighbouring church primary school under one executive headteacher since 2013. In November 2019 the two schools agreed to federate. The current executive headteacher took up post in September 2019.

The school's Christian vision

Our Ethos / Mission Statement (who we are and what we do)
'Where everyone is valued'

Key findings

- The new executive headteacher has energetically engaged all stakeholders in her work to revitalise the school's Christian character, following a period of stagnation. However, the school does not have a coherent Christian vision and associated values, grounded in a clear Christian narrative.
- Over time, leaders have not established systems to ensure church school governance or to monitor and evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school. There has previously been little engagement with the diocese.
- The school's support of all its pupils in their spiritual development is limited, because leaders and staff do not share an understanding of how this underpins the flourishing of all pupils.
- Some pupils do not see collective worship as an important part of the school day. They do not relate Christian teaching in worship to their own lives, and pupils' role in planning, leading and evaluating worship is underdeveloped.
- Over time religious education (RE) has not been prioritised and provision has been of a poor quality. Work has now begun to address this.

Areas for development

- Develop and embed a new distinctively Christian and inclusive vision that is shared by both school communities, which serves to unify them and also drives improvement across the federation.
- Create and embed systems for school leaders to engage in robust and continuous self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness as a church school, in order to drive forward its rapid improvement.
- Strengthen practice in collective worship, including the involvement of pupils in its planning, leading and evaluation, in order that worship becomes an essential and highly valued part of school life.
- Continue to improve all aspects of RE provision and engage in its rigorous monitoring and evaluation so that its impact on the school community can be recognised and understood.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

St Nicholas' School has experienced changes in leadership over the past year. Following its 'good' judgment in the previous inspection five years ago it was in a position of strength to continue to develop its effectiveness as a church school. Since then, however, a range of challenges and changes have caused turbulence in the school. As a result, although stakeholders are enthusiastic and positive about the future, there is clear evidence that over time the school has failed to maintain its Christian character. The school's vision statement on its website, 'where everyone is valued', is not rooted in a clear theological narrative, and members of the school community do not articulate their understanding of it in terms of a distinctive Christian vision. Parents report their happiness that their children are being taught 'good morals', but these are not attributed clearly to the school's distinctiveness as a church school. Pupils do not understand what 'values' are, and nor do they draw on the vocabulary of Christian values in discussions about the choices they make or the ways in which they behave. Because of the lack of focus on developing the Christian character of the school in recent years, no effective progress has been made in the areas highlighted for improvement in the previous report. Over time, leaders have not established systems to ensure effective church school governance including a system to monitor and evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school's Christian vision. Until this term, there has been a lack of engagement with the diocese and leaders had attended no diocesan training. In the last six years the school's collaborative partnership with its neighbouring church primary school has remained underdeveloped. As a result, St Nicholas' staff and governors have not kept up to date with recent national developments nor maintained an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in a church school. The foundation governor has shown a clear commitment to moving forward and now has some understanding of how the school needs to develop as a church school. The school's collective worship leader personally prioritised collective worship and ensured that the longstanding partnerships with St Nicholas' church and the local Methodist church were sustained. However, other school leaders have failed to give the same priority to collective worship until this term. One consequence of this is that leaders failed to ensure that collective worship occurred daily and reflected the school's distinctive foundation. In addition, monitoring of collective worship did not take place until the start of November 2019. Lack of action by leaders has also prevented the development of RE. The RE leader attended the launch of the new North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus in summer term 2019, but RE was otherwise not prioritised until this term. On taking up post, the executive headteacher began to strengthen and revitalise the school's Christian character, giving priority to its development as a church school. To ensure a secure foundation for all future developments, the executive headteacher has engaged all stakeholders with drive and commitment this term to audit and evaluate current practice. Ahead of formal federation between the two schools in December, the executive headteacher has worked with advisers from the diocese. Consequently, pupils, staff and parents have made considerable progress on work that will contribute to the development of a new distinctively Christian and inclusive vision that is shared by both schools.

Over the past two years, progress for pupils has been mixed, with progress in writing and mathematics well below national expectations. The new executive headteacher has plans for improvement, which are in their early stages and which have yet to show impact. The school makes provision for the social, emotional and learning needs of its pupils, linking this to the idea that everyone is valued. The lack of a distinctive Christian vision, however, means that the school's SEND provision and its Christian character remain unconnected. Pupils at the school benefit from a curriculum that is enriched with musical and sporting activities, and forest school provision. However, school leaders and staff do not share an understanding of spiritual development and how it underpins the flourishing of all pupils. As a result, there is not a coherent approach to spiritual development. The school's support of all its pupils in their spiritual development is currently limited, with too few planned curriculum opportunities for pupils to explore 'big' questions or to experience wonder and mystery across the curriculum.

The school community recognises and celebrates its achievements and successes both in and outside school in weekly Friday celebration assembly. Pupils and their parents recognise the importance of striving to be the best you can be. Many pupils take on leadership roles in school, taking responsibility for particular aspects of the school's life. These opportunities support pupils' character and moral development. The recent Children in Need bring and buy sale, organised by the school council, encouraged pupils' understanding of how they can help make changes in the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. This aspect of the school's work, however, is limited, and is undernourished because it is not inspired by a distinctively Christian vision.

Pupils' behaviour is good and their relationships throughout the school day are strong. Individual pupils receive effective behaviour support where necessary. Pupils and their parents feel well supported by school staff in times of difficulty. The school takes a positive approach to behaviour management and affirms pupils in their good behaviour and attitudes at the weekly celebration assembly. Restorative practice is a feature of the school's behaviour policy. This policy, however, and the behaviour and relationships in the school community that stem from it are not rooted in a distinctive Christian vision and associated values. This diminishes their value and impact.

The school is an inclusive community where all are treated with dignity and respect. Pupils are accepting and kind to others, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils say that any issues they might have are promptly dealt with and resolved by staff. Across the curriculum, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and respect for religious and cultural diversity.

Collective worship is distinctively Christian. Planned by the collective worship leader, and led by all members of staff, it is based on biblical teaching and stories. It includes seasons in the Church's calendar and major Christian festivals. Ministers from the parish church and the Methodist church also regularly lead worship. Extra-curricular 'messy church' occurs twice termly, which pupils describe as 'really fun.' Through this, pupils are able to experience a variety of worship styles and approaches. Parents attend church services to mark major festivals; they value and enjoy this. Pupils report that worship has improved this term because they have greater opportunity to be involved. An Anglican worship structure of gathering, engaging, responding, and sending was introduced during the last school year, but it is not fully implemented, which limits the impact of worship. Pupils do not readily relate the Christian teaching in worship to their own lives and concerns. Whilst leaders see collective worship as an important part of the school day, some pupils do not. The role of pupils in planning and leading worship remains underdeveloped. In this respect, worship provision has not improved since the 2014 inspection. Pupils also do not evaluate collective worship. They have limited understanding of prayer, and of the value of prayer and reflection in their own lives, in both formal and informal contexts. The quality of classroom reflection areas is very inconsistent and this limits pupil engagement. The statutory requirements for collective worship are now being met.

The lack of status given to RE by senior and middle leaders has meant that, over time, provision has been of a poor quality. Older pupils were not enthused by RE last year, because lessons were 'boring' and lacked challenge. In this way, pupils did not flourish. Through giving RE appropriate priority and introducing the North Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus curriculum planning, pupils are now beginning to develop their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major religions as living faiths, and of how faith influences people's actions. This curriculum planning is a new initiative, and is not yet fully and consistently implemented across both key stages in the school. The learning undertaken by key stage 2 pupils is underdeveloped in comparison with that undertaken by key stage 1 pupils. The RE leader has begun to participate in professional development opportunities and has begun to work collaboratively with the RE leader in the other school in the federation.

Executive Headteacher	Sarah Taylor
Inspector's name and number	Canon Linda Burton 426