

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Meltham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Holmfirth Road, Meltham, Holmfirth HD94DA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local Authority	Kirklees
Date of inspection	25 May 2017
Date of last inspection	27 April 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary VC 107718
Headteacher (Acting)	Phil Gibbins
Inspector's name and number	Antoinette Drinkhill 691

School context

The school has 380 pupils on roll and is larger than the average primary school, with an age range of 3 – 11. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a below-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom pupil premium grant provides support is below national levels. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is below national. Percentage attendance levels are above national. Changes to leadership include the substantive headteacher being recently seconded to another school. The school had a short Ofsted inspection March 2017 and was judged to be good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Meltham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The committed and energetic leadership of the acting headteacher has maintained and begun to enhance the Christian vision and values of the school, which directly impact on the day-to-day life of the school and wellbeing of the children.
- In this Christian environment pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are founded on their growing understanding and use of the school's developing Christian values.
- Pupils demonstrate Christian values in action across the school community and beyond.
- Collective worship (CW) is seen as an important aspect of the school life, cultivating moral and spiritual development, inspiring learners to be thoughtful, work hard and achieve well.
- The governors and leadership team are committed to the further development of the Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Review and evaluate the vision and aims of the school to confirm explicit Christian values, so that they are fully understood by all and securely underpin all pupils' behaviour and learning.
- Extend pupils' knowledge of diverse cultures and faiths, including multi-cultural Christianity so that they can more fully understand and respect difference.
- Support pupils in taking more responsibility for routinely planning and leading collective worship so that they feel even more involved in worship and further develop their understanding of it and widen its impact on the school community.
- Provide greater opportunities for all pupils to explore the concept of the Trinity so that they can explain important Christian beliefs about God.

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

Meltham is a welcoming and caring school where children are proud of their learning, their friends and their teachers. Christian values of forgiveness, courage and kindness although often implicit, underpin the Christian character of the school. These values, supported by the school's curriculum drivers of 'learning outdoors, community, performance and independence' have a positive impact on children's confidence and achievement. They impact significantly on children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development, support learning across the whole curriculum and underpin children's wellbeing and sense of community. As a result, children behave well, take responsibility, become independent learners and develop spiritual and emotional awareness. An example of this is the way in which children show kindness and when acting as buddies for younger children and was seen when two very excited reception children greeted their Year 6 buddies and wanted to share their 'good work'. It is also confirmed in positive relationships with parents and families. Parents comment that the staff always 'go the extra mile', 'make learning enjoyable for children' and say that teachers are 'caring and kind'. A focus on creativity, 'social learning' and a broad offer of extra-curricular experiences also promote a positive culture within classrooms and across the school. Admirable use is made of the extensive grounds of the school, with 'forest school' being a key aspect of learning and social development. Creativity and spiritual development are key strengths and seen in the striking art work around school, such as the water colour pictures of animals on a 'Fables' display, the carefully crafted ceramic sheep and in the exuberant rehearsals for the summer concert. Relationships at all levels in school are excellent, evidenced by children's obvious enjoyment of school and high levels of pupil attendance. Children affirm they are listened to and feel that they 'have a say', such as in the planning for the proposed development of a reflection garden. There is a commitment to respectful relationships and care for all members of the school community, which is demonstrated by the excellent behaviour and attitudes of pupils around school and commented upon when children are out of school on trips. Children are eager to support each other, which was seen during a reciprocal reading session and by the caring playground champions. The school recognises that with the largely monocultural background of pupils, its relatively isolated location and close nature of its community, developing understanding of other faiths and cultures is essential and remains a priority. Confirmation of work previously done on this was demonstrated when, during an RE lesson, one child connected the symbolism of respect shown by those of Muslim faith when entering a mosque, is similar to the respect shown by a Christian entering a church. RE has been identified by the school as an area for further development and has been supported by two Local Authority consultants. Evidence of this was seen in a very effective RE lesson on 'what Christians believe about a good life'. Children were actively engaged in the learning, debating competently on the values and attributes that might form a good life according to Christian beliefs. Worship is having an increasingly positive influence on the everyday life of the school and supports children's understanding of faith in the broadest sense. The school is aware of the need to raise the profile of Christian distinctiveness in a sensitive way and is considering how to provide more explicit expressions of this in and around school and externally for example, via the school's website.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is Good

Collective worship (CW) is valued as an important part of school life and a key contributor to the school's ethos. This is supported by a long term plan that connects SEAL themes to key celebrations in the Churches' year, includes a termly Christian value, aspects of the liturgical calendar and links these to bible stories. The school attends church at important times in the year to celebrate major festivals such as Easter and Christmas. An increasing variety of adults and children are involved in leading CW including 'class assemblies', several local church leaders and all staff. Pupils are encouraged to apply the learning from worship to their everyday lives and explore themes further, such as the notion of loss and the Christian value of courage delivered through the story of Jesus' Ascension in to heaven. Links are also made to current events, such as the 'Manchester tragedy' on the day of the inspection, with a minute's reflection and prayers being said. Children say that they enjoy CW, especially when they participate actively. Children say that they are keen to be actively involved in leading worship more regularly and feel they would benefit from the opportunity. Parents agree that they feel welcome and enjoy class worship and the services in church. Classrooms have reflection and response areas and some displays linked to RE. These are used for children to offer prayers and think about others. Prayer is seen as important, with some opportunities provided for children to participate in prayer and reflection during CW and at other times of the day. This is an area that would benefit from further development and focus. CW develops pupils' spirituality as well as their social and moral understanding through the focus on the termly Christian value. Time is also given to reflect upon the 'bigger questions' in life such as the meaning of courage and the struggle of saying goodbye when people leave our lives. Children have some understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and would gain from further exploration of the notion of Trinity to them the chance to develop a deeper understanding of this key Christian belief. Worship is evaluated annually with pupil interviews and weekly with evaluation sheets.

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

The school has experienced significant changes to leadership in the last 12 months with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, a new assistant headteacher and most recently the secondment of the substantive headteacher and subsequent promotion of the deputy to acting headteacher. The acting headteacher has taken on the role with enthusiasm and determination. This has ensured that the school has not lost momentum and has continued to make progress against its stated targets for improvement. The experienced chair of governors has effectively supported the school through this period of significant staff change, particularly in relation to the acting headship. Leaders are approachable and supportive of staff and staff work together well in an atmosphere of mutual support. Governors are now more involved in the evaluation of the school as a church school and with the development planning for improvement. The acting headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is shared by staff and governors. However, the distinctiveness of this vision and the school's Christian values are not always made as explicit as they could be, resulting in a reduced clarity and in less effective evaluation of its effectiveness. The school works in close partnership with families, the local community and clergy to secure good outcomes for pupils. Pupils enjoy school and respect and value each other, with staff having high expectations for behaviour and learning. Parents support and value the school. Their comments include, 'this school is a good school', 'there is always lots going on for children such as baking club and sports activities' and 'teachers are friendly and know you well'. Parents recognise the 'family feel and care' provided for their children. They see this as a clear expression of the school's ethos and Christian underpinning. They are particularly pleased with the level of communication and partnership offered through the school's twitter account which supports involvement in the day to day life of the school. The partnership between school and church is evident. Examples of this include visits from the priest to school and the school to church as well as the incumbent's involvement in pastoral support within the school. The school has used the substantive headteacher's secondment as an opportunity to promote and develop existing leaders in school. The governors recognise the need to ensure meaningful support and CPD for leaders and for all who work at the school. Leadership of CW and RE is taking a higher priority in order to promote effective practice across school. Pupils have an evolving understanding of national and global communities. This is an area that the school has rightly identified as a development priority.

The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship

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