



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

The National Church of England Junior School

Castlegate
Grantham
NG31 6SR

Previous SIAMS grade: Not previously inspected as an academy

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Lincoln

Local authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 10 June 2016

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's unique reference number: 138282

Headteacher: Kay Sutherland

Inspector's name and number: Anne Lumb (333)

School context

The National Church of England Junior School is a larger than average church academy. The school became an academy in July 2012 in partnership with Harrowby Infant School. It serves a diverse community. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds. However, the number of pupils whose first language is not English has been steadily increasing over the last few years. The proportion of those with special educational needs supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has a long history in the town and is located close to the local church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of the National Church of England Junior School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Explicitly distinctive Christian values are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school so that all children are nurtured to 'be their best' - as children loved by God.
- A highly supportive board of trustees provide practical support and appropriate challenge ensuring that the school is continually developing its Christian distinctiveness.
- Strong links with the local church and the wider community enrich the spiritual life of the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Develop and embed new approaches to assessing learning in religious education (RE) so that pupil progress is effectively monitored.

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

This is a diverse and inclusive church school community where Christian values are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school. All members of the school community are highly valued as individuals loved by God. Consequently there is a strong culture of nurture built into the structures necessary to run a large junior school which ensures that all pupils achieve their potential. The school's Christian character clearly defines the approach to regular pupil progress meetings which identifies the progress of all learners so that appropriate interventions and use of nurture groups can be put in place. Learners' achievement meets the national average in all areas at the end of Key Stage 2 and the current Year 6 is expected to meet and exceed the government's floor standards. There is a strong emphasis on meeting the emotional needs of children, often involving families in the learning process. Parents speak of their children being 'happy and safe' in school and able to gain confidence. Children say they feel safe in the church school environment where 'Jesus and God are with us.' Bullying is rare and any issues are dealt with sensitively and appropriately. Attendance is good as a result of raised expectations and support. A review of the school's values focussed attention on six core Christian values which have become firmly embedded through regular exploration within collective worship, RE and other curriculum areas. As a result, learners develop a heightened sense of the importance of listening to God and to each other so that relationships within the school are positive, pupil behaviour is excellent and children are highly courteous and respectful towards visitors; 'We help each other even when we don't have to.' The school is working towards becoming a Rights Respecting School; 'expecting everybody to value one another and understand their own rights and take responsibility for respecting the rights of others.' Teachers comment that the spiritual life of the school, and the way people treat each other, always comes back to the teachings of Jesus. For example, a group of Year 5 boys were enabled to sort out their disagreements by making wiser choices linked to the offer of forgiveness and a new start. Opportunities for spirituality are embedded in the daily life of the school so that children gain appropriate foundations for life-long learning and strong character development through exploration of the values of 'wisdom' and 'endurance' which enable children to 'find peace and quiet in tough times.' Religious education contributes significantly to the Christian character of the school by providing appropriate contexts within which to explore personal beliefs through 'big questions' that promote deeper thinking and explore different religious faiths and traditions. A respectful attitude towards diversity is encouraged throughout the school with different faiths and cultures often being represented among the children in one class; a prayer written by a pupil gives thanks 'for making us all different.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship has a central and highly valued role in the life of the school community. It is well planned, managed and inspirationally delivered with a wide variety of people leading; including staff, children and visitors from the church and the local community. Both children and adults engage positively with collective worship time and also have opportunities to discuss the Christian values explored and the issues raised in the classroom. There are opportunities to raise 'big questions', including with clergy, so that the meaning and relevance of worship time impacts on the lives of all members of the school community. Collective worship is well grounded in Christian teaching and the Anglican tradition so that all learners are able to develop an understanding of the life and character of Jesus. Children speak of the value of using Anglican liturgy such as 'Peace be with you' which reminds them of what Christ said and that He came to bring peace. Within collective worship time there are good opportunities to develop a Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Collective worship is an important aspect of developing personal spirituality for both adults and children. Children comment on the value of being able to write their prayers down and place them in a 'worry bag', knowing that they will then be prayed for. Regular use of the nearby church for worship and musical links between the school and the church have fostered a high degree of respect for the church and an appropriate reverence within collective worship; 'we stand to sing, we don't just slump because we remember Christ is with us'. Children are involved regularly in the planning, leadership and evaluation of collective worship. Comments from the school council about Friday worship time led to a change in the timing of worship (from morning to afternoon) so that the children can immediately tell their parents about the worship time they have just experienced. Reflection areas are in place in classrooms and in the playground and 'pearls of wisdom'

written by the children are displayed in the hall. Children value opportunities for prayer and reflection which are available to them throughout the school day; 'I can go to the (reflection) area in the playground and Jesus is with you and I can tell Him.' Grace, led by the children, is said before lunch and prayers (written by the children or from published resources) are said at the end of the school day. The school prayer is said regularly and expresses the value of service towards God and each other; 'we don't turn anyone away no matter what they believe.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education has a high profile within the school curriculum. The RE curriculum is well planned and staff have increasing levels of confidence in teaching the subject so that learning activities are appropriately differentiated which ensures that the children are highly engaged and positive about RE. A Year 6 child commented that 'RE is the best part of the day. It helps me to be strong in God.' Diocesan training on the new RE syllabus has been accessed leading to appropriate revisions in lesson planning and recording pupil progress without the use of levels. These new approaches to assess learning in RE require further development and embedding within classroom practice. Progress shows that learning, including the development of questioning skills, is captured in a variety of ways; through summative end of unit quizzes and formative assessment during lessons such as the use of a graffiti wall in a Year 5 lesson to record insightful ideas about Biblical teachings and the Queen's character. Effective monitoring of RE teaching by the subject co-ordinator and senior leaders shows that the quality of teaching is at least good. Teachers use mixed ability groups which has improved the quality of discussion and explanation between pupils so that they make connections between different religions. For example, a group of children in Year 4 asking a Hindu member of their group to help them in understanding what is happening in a picture of a Hindu wedding when promises are made and how this compares with the promises made at a Christian wedding. Pupils gain a better understanding of the religions they are studying and so are able to develop deeper thinking and ask searching questions. A Year 6 class studying the 'I am' sayings of Jesus make links to the values of the Queen and to their own lives and values; 'It's like Jesus' words are feeding us.'

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and trustees confidently and consistently articulate an explicit Christian vision for the school which underpins their approach to ensure good standards of academic achievement and the well-being of the whole school community. A well-informed board of trustees, which monitors and evaluates the school's Christian distinctiveness effectively and insightfully, offers appropriate challenge and support to the headteacher and senior leaders ensuring effective strategies for improvement are in place and a strong focus on meeting the needs of all learners is maintained. The local church, diocese and wider community contribute fully to school life to ensure that children understand the mutual benefits for all groups and the ways in which they can contribute to society through, for example, charitable actions. The director of the local Foodbank comments on the 'joy the children demonstrate in being able to help ... the Spirit is at work (in the school).' There is an excellent relationship between the church and the school demonstrated on the day of the inspection when the rector offered to host a street party in the church instead of on the wet school playground. Parents are highly supportive of the school with good numbers attending services held in the church. Parents speak positively of a school where they are listened to by teachers and always receive a warm welcome from the school's reception staff, all in the context of being a church school. The school regularly accesses training from the diocese which supports the development of RE and Christian values. An increasingly distributed leadership, linked to teacher appraisal, is allowing all members of staff to access appropriate training and develop skills which enable them to progress in their careers. This approach to succession planning provides an important contribution to developing and maintaining the school's Christian distinctiveness as effective recruitment and induction procedures are in place which explain and explore the school's Christian character. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

