



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Sleights Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Ingham Close
Sleights
Whitby
YO22 5DN

Diocese: York

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Date of inspection: 28 November 2013

Date of last inspection: December 2009

School's unique reference number: 810395

Headteacher: Miss Caroline Spencer

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

Sleights Primary School serves the large village of Sleights and the surrounding area on the edge of the North York Moors and the outskirts of Whitby. Currently there are 85 pupils on roll who are mainly from a White British background. A significant number of pupils are on free school meals. The headteacher has been in post for four years. The parish church of St John's is within walking distance of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sleights as a Church of England school are good

- The welcoming family Christian community, embraced by everyone.
- The flourishing partnerships between church, school and village communities.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils who become confident learners and are encouraged to achieve their best.

Areas to improve

- Involve pupils and governors in the evaluation of collective worship to ensure best quality worship at all times.
- Embed a systematic method for the governors to evaluate church school effectiveness in order to set appropriate targets to improve the children's learning and progress.
- Enable pupils to take on the ownership of worship for church school services.

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

Sleights Primary School provides a very positive learning environment where pupils are proud

to belong, feel valued and achieve well. Data shows that pupils make good progress over time, with some pupils making three or four levels of progress. This is because of the influence of Christian values and the Christian mission of the school. There are a number of success stories, with some pupils aspiring to be teachers. Pupils enjoy coming to this school where there are no exclusions and attendance is good. Excellent systems are in place as a result of the Christian vision in this inclusive community to nurture pupils and reward positive attendance such as the weekly attendance cup. Parents value the 'family atmosphere and the trust, humility and compassion and kindness we see in the children here, loving one another'. Parents also speak highly of how 'every child's individual needs are met, whatever they are'. They appreciate that staff listen and act upon what the children say and do'. They tell of how this school is helping their children 'in building confidence in them and helping them to flourish'. Bright, prominent displays around school, together with reflection spaces in classrooms and the hall, enhance pupils' spiritual development. Such areas proudly display a carved values tree which invite pupils' questions to God and honour key Bible stories and Christian values, helping each child to flourish and 'to be the change you want to see in the world'. Pupils say they enjoy religious education (RE), which enables them to 'find out about other religions and teaches you about your own'. They demonstrate good theological literacy and are able to explain Christian concepts such as The Trinity and incarnation as well as explaining the importance of the Jewish Shema prayer. They acknowledge that the 'I can Footsteps' in RE help them improve in their work. This self evaluation approach in RE is in its infancy and has yet to be fully realised. Pupils' learning in RE is enhanced through visits to other places of worship, such as the synagogue in Middlesbrough. The school Nativity Play enables pupils to identify with people being changed as a result of meeting Jesus, 'the little baby boy who grows up'. Pupils experience the Christian values of service and gratitude through supporting Middlesbrough Foodbank and the homeless in Whitby. Their global awareness is enhanced through activities in Africa Week. Pupils also value outdoor prayer spaces with the willow dome, sensory garden and storytelling chair, speaking with enthusiasm about 'looking at nature and how much God has done for us'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The attitude of pupils to collective worship is good because the quality of worship offered to them is making a real difference in their lives, contributing greatly to their spiritual development. Prayerful and meaningful worship takes place, with a focus on Christian values and Jesus' teaching in The Bible. Pupils say they appreciate 'the silence' in worship as they 'get to think'. They value 'everyone coming together in prayer', speaking of The Trinity as God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They speak of enjoying the quiet and spaciousness of St John's Church. Pupils say they learn from Bible stories such as The Good Samaritan to show compassion, and acknowledge that, 'if you pray to God, he will help you in some way'. Pupils are able to make connections between the teaching they receive in worship and their own lives. A good example is relating worship on 'Trust' to working together at East Barnby residential when pupils 'trust someone to hold a rope when we are climbing' and learn survival skills. Key festivals such as Christingle are celebrated in church with the gardening club, supported by volunteers, planting bulbs for the Easter service. Planning and evaluation of worship by pupils is still in its infancy. Pupils show reverence in worship. A good example is when Year 5 pupils visited St John's Church and knelt down at the altar rail. The parish church is currently in an interregnum, but pupils speak about how they value and learn from the Bible stories shared by the Methodist minister and his puppets. Interactive prayer spaces encourage pupils to reflect on forgiveness. Staff currently evaluate worship. Pupils welcome writing down their thoughts about worship to share with governors. However, governors currently do not have a formal system of monitoring worship or reviewing pupils' comments on worship. Pupils also welcome taking on more responsibility to plan and lead worship for church school services in St John's Church, saying they aspire to planning worship 'every now and again and do something important in church'. In all these ways, worship is constantly enhancing pupils' spiritual development.

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

The school's Christian ethos is effectively promoted by the headteacher and embraced by everyone so the school's Church of England foundation is celebrated and secured. Pupils have felt valued and gained confidence, enabling them to make better progress. As a result, standards have risen over the past two years, with supportive guidance from the diocese on improvement and development. Much has been achieved by the hard work, dedication and commitment of the headteacher. Foundation governors' monitoring and evaluation involves looking systematically at each area of school life. However, leaders recognise this needs fully embedding. Integral to the work of the governing body is ensuring that church school ethos is on the agenda of every governing body meeting to ensure progress in pupils' learning. New foundation governors are keen to help make a difference in their monitoring and evaluative role. The school's procedures are effective in supporting the development of the whole child and their learning, enabling them to achieve well. Governors also pay testimony to, and acknowledge that the ethos of this church school has been 'engrained' since the headteacher has been in post. Indeed, church school distinctiveness is included as a focus on the school development plan. The successful consortium of the local schools in the Esk Valley helps to promote the professional development of staff and supports their preparation for future leadership across church schools. RE is effectively led and managed and supported by the headteacher. Pupils have a voice through the school council. The school has identified the importance of the children's views to be shared at governing body meetings. Since the last inspection, Christian values and visions have been made explicit through the values tree. The headteacher, Parochial Church Council (PCC) members and the vicar have worked closely together and consequently had a major impact on the pace at which the school has developed its Christian values. For example, the development points from the last inspection have been revisited and effective actions taken, such as the commissioning of the carved values trees around the school. As a result, there is now very good evidence of the Christian foundation and ethos visible around the school. Staff and pupils were involved in helping to re-write the school mission statement. Articles written by the children for the monthly 'Link' magazine, enable the school to communicate what it is doing to the wider community. Sleights values support from the diocese, providing INSET for staff and governor development. Parents are consulted and say they feel well supported by the school. They also feel their concerns are listened to and they are welcomed into the 'friendly family community'.

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