

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Clifford Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School

Psalter Lane, Sheffield, S11 8YU	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese / Methodist District	Sheffield
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Sheffield
Date of inspection	13 November 2017
Date of last inspection	September 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Infant 107150
Headteacher	Sue Preston
Inspector's name and number	Kerry Palmer (60)

School context

Clifford is a small, one form entry, infant school which attracts pupils from a wide area of Sheffield. Although predominantly of White British heritage, around one third of the children are from diverse backgrounds. There are strong links with Ecclesall Church of England Junior School and Ecclesall Infant School. Plans are in place for Clifford, in association with these schools, to expand to a two-site primary school in 2018. St Andrew's joint Anglican/Methodist Church is close by and strongly represented in school life.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Clifford Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The energy, insight and professional commitment of the headteacher to sustain and promote a school clearly grounded in Christian values that successfully engages the whole school community.
- The very special and individual Christian approach to learning, promoted by staff, parents and governors who work as one to successfully promote quality education for every child.
- The positive approach to change which puts the school's Christian ethos and values at the forefront of future developments.
- The positive involvement of clergy and parish ensuring that the school's church foundation is recognised and valued in the community.

Areas to improve

- Increase opportunities for children to plan and deliver worship in a liturgical context which extends ownership and appreciation of the Christian context.
- Explore strategies to make the Gospel foundation of the school's strong Christian values at the centre of school life more explicit in school, key documentation and the school website.
- Incorporate the evaluation and development planning of the school's Christian distinctiveness into whole school monitoring and review to emphasis its centrality to the school's growth.

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

Clifford is a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing church school where the wellbeing of the whole community is of the utmost importance. The school motto 'Learning, creativity and love' is lived out by all and is a driving force in school life. School leaders and staff successfully promote core Christian values of service, compassion and

determination which, along with enquiry based learning, results in progress and attainment, including that of the disadvantaged, consistently well above expectations. Attainment is recognised as in the top 10% nationally. There are many clubs and enrichment activities to challenge and enthuse children of all abilities and breakfast and after-school clubs to support working families. The whole staff team know each child very well and support their individual needs with professional skill and Christian love. Children's behaviour is excellent; there is a considerate, supportive atmosphere where forgiveness and reconciliation are taught and practiced. They grow in confidence, self-assurance and maturity. They say they feel safe and are clearly very happy at school. Consequently, attendance is very good. Children's comments include 'She is funny and kind' and... 'I can always go to her with a problem.' The school recognises that their children are growing up in an ever-changing world and ensures that age related teaching about other cultures and faiths is woven into the curriculum and worship planning. Cultural Awareness Week being one example of an effective High Focus Week where the whole school explore a topic in depth. The school correctly sees itself as 'Christian but big hearted.' Recognition of and empathy for the less fortunate is evident in support for a range of charities, such as a shoe collection to be sent to the Philippines and a school 'reverse advent calendar' when goods are collected day by day in Advent towards a Christmas donation to 'Homeless and Rootless at Christmas', in Sheffield. There is no doubt that the school promotes children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development very successfully.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship and prayer are integral to the school day and central to the promotion of the school's Christian ethos. It engages and excites the children with a series of well planned themes featuring church festivals and seasons, with bible stories illustrating Christian values. However, it is generally referred to as assembly. The central visual focus of a beautiful stained-glass window from the 'old' St Andrew's Church effectively sets the scene. Children display a growing awareness of the nature of prayer to say thank-you, sorry and to ask God for help. They enjoy writing their own prayers, including a sung grace for lunchtime, and are familiar with the Lord's Prayer and why it is special. A class visit to Sheffield cathedral to experience the Advent prayer progress is typical of the thought given to children's spiritual development. The school needs to further develop the potential of reflective areas and prayer spaces. Worship songs are sung with gusto and children enjoy active participation. The choir are often called upon to perform at community events such as the local Salvation Army and old peoples' home. Children's contribution to the planning and leadership of worship continues to be under developed and is recognised as an area for development as the school grows in the future. Parents eagerly join family assemblies and festival services in St Andrew's Church at times such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Church visits are also used to introduce the children to key Christian seasons, such as the introduction to Lent, 'I loved it when Imogen put ash on our heads,' a child wrote. School worship is regularly led by the vicar and other church workers. This adopts a more liturgical setting which is not evident on other occasions. Effective strategies are incorporated into worship and RE to help the children have a growing appreciation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Talking of the Holy Spirit, a child said of God, 'I will always be with you in your heart.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is well led by an experienced subject specialist and committed headteacher who have a clear understanding of what high quality and effective RE looks like. Children respond enthusiastically to quality teaching which brings the subject alive. The introduction of 'Understanding Christianity' resources is promoting theological development through deep thinking about big questions such as 'Who is God?', extending the established 'What if?' approach. Governors have been kept informed of this initiative. RE is wisely delivered as whole school blocks which maximise impact and have all staff working as a focussed team. The topic of 'What is church?' explored by children 'creating a church' in the school hall to embed learning about church furnishings, with Year 1 and 2 visiting St Andrew's Church with foundation governor 'experts', to make a photographic record to support their learning. Much use is made of creative approaches using art, music and drama to embed children's learning. Children talk about RE happily and clearly enjoy the subject and learn a lot. Staff have a clear knowledge of each individual child's capabilities and successfully focus questioning and marking to move each one on at an appropriate rate. Individual pupil assessment needs further development following changes to the curriculum. Independent monitoring confirms that teaching is consistently good or better with high levels of engagement and pace. Children's subject knowledge is unusually extensive for their age. Thoughtful planning and effective teaching ensures that RE makes a significant contribution to the children's social, cultural, moral and spiritual development and highlights the Christian character of the school. Appropriate teaching about other faiths helps children appreciate similarities and differences and respect for other cultures, exploration of approaches to prayer being one example.

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

It is evident to all that this is a school with Christian values at its heart. The Christian commitment, vision and professional skill of the headteacher drives a unique school which successfully endeavours to do the best for each individual child. School leaders and governors have an accurate appreciation of the school's strengths and focussed priorities for improvement. They are currently alive to the potential of a revised vision for a full 5- 11 year old pupil primary school. However, the evaluation of Christian distinctiveness is not incorporated into main school improvement plan. All the staff work closely together in a mutually supportive team in the pursuit of sustained growth and promotion of the school's values and ethos. The importance of relevant professional development is recognised. A recent in-service training day focussing on 'The Challenge of Change' being an example, with the forthcoming school growth in mind. Good use is made of diocesan support and training through RE coordinator meetings, headteacher briefings and specific training such as 'Understanding Christianity'. Consequently, standards are high, children are enthusiastic and the whole school community works as one. Governors know the school well and balance challenge with active support. Foundation governors do much to promote recognition of the school's church foundation and its Christian ethos both through governance and involvement in class activities. In collaboration with governors from Eccleall they are working hard to ensure that the special character of and Christian ethos at Clifford continues in the planned expansion to a voluntary aided primary school. One Eccleall governor spoke of 'Clifford's clear sense of identity as a church school...evident at every level...this has grown into a genuine partnership'. Links with St Andrew's church community have grown and strengthened since the last inspection. The vicar is much involved in school life as pastor, worship leader, governor and friend. There is much mutually beneficial partnership such as combined summer fairs, eco projects and promotion of 'Sandcastles' church worship. Parents are full of praise for the school and appreciate the intimate knowledge staff have of each child. Comments include, 'A culture of openness and integrity...children genuinely care for each other...it's just an amazing school.' This extends to an appreciation of the school's Christian distinctiveness, 'My children have the confidence to talk about faith...it's the things you cannot see that matter.' A small parents' prayer group meets regularly in school. Families are much involved in the life of the school including regular opportunities to tour school to view displays of children's work which are brought alive with smart phones and technology and PTA social events such as Yulefest. The school fully meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship and the whole community looks forward to its extension into the full primary school experience.