



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Sowerby Village Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

St Peter's Avenue

Sowerby

Sowerby Bridge

Halifax

HX6 1HB

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: Calderdale

Date of inspection: 9 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 11 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 133671

Headteacher: Lynsey Mitchell

Inspector's name and number: Geraldine Cooper (696)

School context

Sowerby Village Primary School is a small, single form entry school of 162 pupils situated on the rural outskirts of the small town of Sowerby Bridge. The majority of pupils are white British. The number of pupils receiving pupil premium is higher than the national average. Having previously been in special measures the school is now judged to be 'good' by Ofsted. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant change in staffing and leadership. The current headteacher and the incumbent have both been in post for three years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sowerby Village Church of England VC Primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The capacity of the governing body and senior leadership to promote a consistent and coherent understanding and application of the school's core Christian values which underpins and ensures that pupil achievement is in line with or above national averages.
- The strong Christian principles of the school contribute to the excellent behaviour of the pupils.
- Bible based collective worship secures a sound understanding of Christian teachings and values amongst all pupils.
- The relationship between the Church and the school is extremely strong and is mutually beneficial.

Areas to improve

- Opportunities for pupils to meet with people from a wider range of Christian and other faiths should be enhanced and embedded.
- Increase the number of opportunities for pupils to plan and lead collective worship.
- Ensure that self-evaluation of the school's distinctiveness as a church school is rigorously embedded as an agenda item at full governing body meetings.

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

The total coherence of the school's core Christian values of friendship, thankfulness, trust and forgiveness underpins all aspects of school life. The contribution of these values to pupil attainment is evident in the fact that the majority of pupils reach or exceed national expectations. The understanding and application of the core Christian values by all pupils has enabled exceptionally good behaviour to flourish. Pupils recognise that their teachers are good role models and they seek, through 'right choices' to copy them. Leaders recognise that good behaviour is central to creating a learning environment in which pupils achieve. Behaviour policies are applied consistently and with compassion, pupils seeing this as core values exemplified. The combination of good behaviour and a compassionate and systematic approach to progress has meant that the school has been able to support the transition of pupils from other schools successfully. Pupils that have transferred to the school have the confidence to talk about their learning journey and about how the atmosphere of friendship and forgiveness has helped them to settle. They recognise that this is a church school. Core values have been embedded through values theme days. Pupils have had the opportunity to create a school environment in which enables them to reflect upon and appreciate the world around them. The school is extremely sensitive to the needs of those pupils who are not Christian. Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of respecting and accepting the beliefs of others. Through the religious education (RE) curriculum pupils learn about people of different faiths, although experiencing denominations, faiths and cultures from a wider local and global perspective is currently limited. A wide range of teaching strategies are deployed to enhance pupils' enjoyment of, and achievement in, RE which is successfully linked to other areas of the curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective worship is planned in meticulous detail and consistently reinforces the school's core Christian values. All members of staff are expected to lead collective worship and the headteacher ensures that teachers receive training and support to enable them to do this effectively. The school has a worship committee which is recruited from Year 6. The committee plays a significant role in the evaluation of collective worship and contributes to the planning and delivery of the half termly services in the Church. They have a very sound appreciation of the significance of the Christian values and ethos to the school. Their contribution to school life would be greatly increased if the opportunity to plan and lead worship was extended. Because core Christian values have so successfully been embedded in school life, additional values have been introduced. These are structured into collective worship planning and are extending pupils understanding of broader Christian values. The use of Bible stories is structured to ensure that pupils develop an understanding of the chronology of the Bible and the early Church. Pupils can explicitly relate Bible stories to core values and to their own experiences. Reflection areas in each classroom and around the school encourage pupils to reflect on their daily experiences. Pupils are able to describe how writing in the reflection book or holding a pebble makes them feel better. Pupils attend Church for key Christian festivals and at the beginning and end of each half term. These services of blessing and praise have strengthened the bond between the school and the church and enhanced pupils' sense of the purpose and presence of God in their lives. Pupils readily describe God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and consider that the Holy Spirit is with them in what they do. They explain that they know this because of the formal blessing that they receive from the incumbent at Church and in collective worship. Pupils' understanding of diversity within Christianity would be enhanced through the opportunity to experience a wider range of Christian traditions including those from other continents.

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

The headteacher, with the support of governors and the incumbent has brought an inspired and effective Christian vision to the school which is recognised as leading to a dramatic improvement in behaviour and in attainment. The core values create a firm foundation on which the work of the school is built and are effectively cross referenced throughout all of the schools policies and documentation. This has enabled the school to move from an Ofsted category to being judged as good. The leadership team is supported by all staff in promoting the Christian ethos of the school and this is evidenced and reflected in the pupils' enjoyment of school life. Regular consultation with parents indicates that they appreciate and support the school's Christian ethos. It is evident that the areas for development from the previous inspection have been systematically addressed. Senior leaders and governors now have a shared vision, alongside all staff, for continued development of the distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sowerby Village as a church school. This is informed by a systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation involving all groups in the school community and subsequently fed back to governors which, in turn, informs self-evaluation and policy. This would be strengthened further by being an explicit item on the governing body agenda. The school has worked closely with the Diocese to develop and enhance the impact of the core Christian values. Opportunities for professional development of staff and governors have ensured that they have a clear understanding of the criteria by which the school's distinctiveness is judged, and secures the ethos of the school within the context of succession planning. The school creates an environment where learning experiences readily promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers and pupils benefit from opportunities to work with other schools in their cluster and because of this older pupils are confident about their transition to secondary school. The leadership of RE is shared between the headteacher and a highly committed member of staff. They work together to ensure that RE planning and monitoring is effective in creating a culture of expectation, enjoyment and achievement. Pupils are aware of the progress that they are making in RE which is consistent with other subject areas. It was evident from an observation of Year 2 pupils talking about Baptism that the RE curriculum complements collective worship and effectively promotes pupils' understanding of Christian concepts from an early age.

SIAMS report June 2015, Sowerby Village CE VC Primary School, Sowerby, HX6 1HB