



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

East Cowton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary	East Cowton Northallerton DL7 0BD
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Name of federation	The Federation of East Cowton and Kirkby Fleetham Church of England Primary Schools
Date/s of inspection	29 September 2016
Date of last inspection	5 October 2011
School's unique reference number	121488
Headteacher	Helen Dudman
Inspector's name and number	Lorraine Hanson 769

School context

East Cowton is a rural Church of England school, which is much smaller than the average primary school. In September 2015 the school was federated with Kirby Fleetham CE (VC) Primary School, the headteacher was appointed and a new joint Governing Body was formed. There are two classes in the school, one for Key Stage 1 and one for Key Stage 2 children. Currently all pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported by statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of East Cowton as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, together with the support of staff and governors, provide exceptional Christian focus to the development of East Cowton as a Church of England School
- Distinctive Christian values are woven throughout the curriculum and life of the school, impacting extremely positively on children and enabling them to thrive in their behaviour and personal development, which are exemplary
- Collective worship is highly valued and central to the school day, it inspires and impacts profoundly on children's spiritual development, which is outstanding
- Relationships across the school are founded on Christian principles and are extremely positive and supportive

Areas to improve

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the school's distinctiveness as a church school is carried out systematically and regularly over time to promote continued improvement

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

East Cowton is a school with a strong Christian ethos, where Christian values, including friendship, courage, honesty, endurance and hope are woven throughout the curriculum and the life of the school. The school mission statement, 'learning through friendship, faith and respect, the possibilities are endless...' encapsulates the motivation school leaders have to continue to move the school forward as a Christian school. A governor described the ethos by saying, 'It is like a bubble around the school, with the Holy Spirit here'. Great emphasis is placed on developing the 'whole' child and Christian values impact extremely positively enabling them to thrive in their personal development and behaviour, which are exemplary. Spiritual development is very effectively nurtured across the curriculum, through collective worship and religious education (RE). Reflection spaces in classrooms and outside invite reflection and prayer. The curriculum is enriched through many experiences to promote 'awe and wonder', for example through visits and visitors to school, which contribute extremely positively to the outstanding quality of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children demonstrate compassion, through their involvement in the Archbishop of York's Young Leader project, the 'Send My Friend to School' campaign, a Gambian school link, charity fundraising and support for the local foodbank. Children were inspired by the concept of random acts of kindness and showed their initiative and social conscience through, for example, baking scones or biscuits and giving them to people in the village and a care home. Children wrote letters, as if they were refugee children, which promoted understanding and empathy with their plight. These initiatives, together with the many links with other schools, the church and local community very effectively promote children's understanding of different communities and respect for diversity. The link with the Gambian school is supported through a regular visitor taking the children's letters and funds raised to buy books for the Gambian school library and returning with letters and photographs for the children of East Cowton. In an RE lesson children considered the possible issues raised by the Gambian school's nature as a joint Christian and Muslim school, when children demonstrated their firm understanding of Christianity as a world-wide, multi-cultural religion. Children show respect for people from different religions, which is promoted in RE lessons, a Mosque visit and through an inspiring visit from a Sikh man, who spoke about his religion and culture. Children are engaged, excited and challenged by RE and it contributes significantly to their understanding of Christian values. Younger children were prompted to reflect on how Jesus would respond towards people who were unhelpful, after listening to the story of 'The Little Red Hen'. They are able to explain a range of Bible stories and how these relate to their own lives. For example, a child commented, 'The story of the wise man tells us we should build our lives on Jesus and try to do as he would do'. Christian value impact positively on children's motivation and extremely positive attitudes to learning. Their academic attainment is high and they progress well, including disadvantaged pupils. Children enjoy coming to school and their attendance is consistently high. There have been no exclusions in the past three years.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to school life, it inspires and impacts profoundly on children's exemplary attitudes and behaviour, as well as on the very positive relationships across the school. Children respond with enthusiasm, enjoyment and due reverence. They say it gives them space to reflect and one said, 'It calms me down and makes me feel even closer to God'. A candle is lit at the beginning of worship and a cross is displayed. Children know and enjoy singing a wide repertoire of worship songs. The whole school says the Lord's Prayer together with confidence. Children show a deep understanding of Christian teachings, traditions and the seasons of the church. Daily collective worship is well planned across the school year, with emphasis on Christian values and the Holy Trinity. Biblical material is regularly included, together with music, prayer, drama and reflection. Children talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with exceptional understanding. All Key Stage 2 children plan and lead worship independently at least termly and know the appropriate elements to include, such as reflection, prayer, Bible stories and worship songs. When leading worship for the rest of the school, a group of Key Stage 2 children confidently explained the Christian value of Courage, by telling the Old Testament story of David and Goliath and

saying 'God puts courage inside us.' Other children were able to show their understanding of this, with one commenting, 'It tells us to use the courage God gave us to overcome the 'giants', which are the challenges in our lives'. A range of adult leaders bring a variety of approaches to collective worship and include all teachers, the vicar, a local canon and a representative from the New Life Baptist Church. Provision is made through a group of churches, including All Saints Church for a youth worker, who leads Messy Church monthly in school. Children and members of the school community feel valued. This is highlighted through the board in the hall entitled 'We are all God's Children' with the names of all children, staff and governors displayed. When a child is ill and absent from school, their photograph is put onto the cloud on this board and during collective worship the school are invited to think about this child and say a private prayer for them. School services are held in All Saints Church at the main Christian festivals. Children make wreaths and take part in a parade and an open air annual Remembrance Day Service at the church. Services in church and the weekly Celebration Worship are attended by parents in good number. The school is a prayerful community with many opportunities built into the school day for collective, spontaneous or private prayer and reflection. There are reflection spaces in each classroom, with a prayer tree, cross, Bible, prayer prompts and inspirational Bible quotes. Outside quiet areas are provided where children can find space to reflect and the 'Peace Garden' is used for open air collective worship. Prayers children have written are regularly offered in collective worship and displayed on the prayer board in the hall. Children show confidence in prayer and one of the youngest children volunteered to say a prayer for the whole school before lunch. One child said, 'When we pray it makes me feel like we are all God's children, all special'. Governors and staff monitor worship, with children's and parents' views taken into account. Evaluations of worship have led to developments, such as the creation of a planning sheet to support children with planning collective worship.

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

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, together with the support of dedicated staff and governors is extremely effective in providing a high quality education for each child, which is built on Christian principles. The headteacher and school leaders live out and promote a vision rooted in distinctly Christian values. Governors, parents and staff talk about the positive effect the school's Christian ethos and values have on the daily lives and achievements of children. There have been substantial changes to the school leadership since September 2015 as well as the federation with Kirby Fleetham CE (VC) School. The new team work together extremely well, they have risen to the challenges and recognise the benefits brought about by the changes, such as pooling expertise and sharing good practice. Governors are dedicated to the school and carry out their role very effectively. Staff and governors benefit from diocesan courses and are committed to continuing to develop the vision for the school based on the mission statement and Christian values. Parents are fully involved and supportive of the school. A group of parents initiated the 'Pebble Award' which is presented to the child, chosen by other children, who most successfully demonstrates the current Christian value, which promotes positive behaviour and attitudes linked to the values. One parent commented, 'There is a real family feeling to this small Christian school'. Parents appreciate the way older children readily help the younger ones. A parent commented, 'There is a strong message which comes from the Christian ethos of the school about respecting and looking after each other'. There are strong links with All Saints Church, the vicar leads school worship monthly, there is support from a local canon and school services are held in church at the main Christian festivals and Leavers' Service. Year 6 children also participated in the Leavers' Service in Ripon Cathedral. Children have been motivated to help others through the Archbishop of York's Young Leader's Project, which all Key Stage 2 children successfully completed last academic year. The development points from the last inspection have been fully addressed. The school self-evaluation of collective worship is thorough and contributes well to improvements. However, the monitoring of the distinctiveness of the school, as a church school is not yet systematic, so not as effective as it could be.