



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Aidan's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Smithy Close
Skelmanthorpe
Huddersfield
HD8 9DQ

Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: Kirklees

Dates of inspection: 15 March 2016

Date of last inspection: November 2010

School's unique reference number: 107744

Headteacher: Revd Evelyne Barrow

Inspector's name and number: Nigel Castledine (652)

School context

St Aidan's is an averaged sized first school set in a semi-rural environment. Almost all children are White British. The proportion of disadvantaged children is below average as is the proportion of children with special education needs or disabilities. Since the last inspection there has been a significant number of new members of teaching staff appointed. The parish church is a fifteen minute walk from the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Aidan's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's pervasive Christian ethos positively influences every aspect of the children's learning and nurture
- Mutually caring relationships, stemming from gospel teaching, create a caring Christian school family in which the God-given value of each child is celebrated
- Excellent Religious Education (RE) enhances the children's understanding of the school's rich daily collective worship and enriches all areas of the curriculum

Areas to improve

- Further children's understanding of Christianity as a global diverse faith through development of the links between St Aidan's and a Christian school in Tanzania
- Enhance the school's Christian standpoint on education through extended use of 'What if Learning' approaches which put a clear faith perspective into the curriculum

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

Distinctive Christian values underpin all aspects of school life through their positive impact on the daily lives and achievements of the children. The chosen values of love, friendship, compassion, thankfulness, hope and trust, support the school in realising its vision statement of 'love, laugh, learn, live'. A parent commented, 'The Christian ethos of the school is real one, not something nominal'. This ethos encourages children to make significantly good progress through school. By the end of Year 5, data shows that children are at or exceeding national expectations. Because the faith ethos ensures children feel cared for and loved, they enjoy their learning and want to be in school. This is reflected in attendance figures which exceed national expectations. Living out the chosen Christian values, there is an emphasis on warm, positive relationships, which are modelled by the staff for the children. Behaviour is exceptionally good and is supported by the Christian principles of forgiveness and a daily fresh start. The children have a mature understanding of what constitutes bullying and are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy. A special St Aidan's award is presented to children who exemplify the school's Christian values. Although the immediate community has few families from different cultures or faith beliefs, the children express a high degree of respect for diversity and difference. There is an awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith but this is not fully developed. Christian service for others is a central aspect of school life leading to many volunteers to fill such posts as play-leaders and buddies. School councillors' suggestions have brought about significant improvements to school life. The children extend this Christian caring through their support for older members of the community. They also fund-raise for local appeals that link with school life as well as national and international charities. Collective worship and RE both play a major role in enriching the Christian character of the school. This is because they provide a spiritual dimension to learning which influences all subjects of the curriculum. This faith emphasis supports the children to develop their investigative skills as they consider life's major questions. Among these, children consider the nature and existence of God. A Year 5 girl wrote, 'If I met God, I would be overjoyed. I could thank him for making such a beautiful world'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Inspirational collective worship is central to the school's ethos and life. This is because it engages all children in coming together in prayer, reflection and praise of God whilst developing spirituality. Worship themes also raise aspirations as they inspire a high level of spiritual and moral reflection. An example is the challenge they give children to take a Christian stance on their personal conduct and actions. Worship is inclusive, and whilst distinctly Christian, it takes account of the needs of those of other world faiths or of no particular faith. It connects Christian teaching and Biblical theology to the school's chosen gospel values and children's own lives. There is a strong focus, as the Christian year is followed, on the life and teaching of Jesus and on God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. School liturgy contains appropriate elements of Anglican tradition, including a worship table, cross and three candles symbolising the Holy Trinity. Worship songs, traditional blessings and prayers such as the Lord's Prayer are used regularly. Children are invited to pray and reflect during the day, with Grace being said before lunch and class prayers ending school. Each classroom has an inviting prayer and reflection area, with interactive faith displays, books and artefacts all stimulating spirituality. Worship is led by the headteacher, teaching staff, the parish priest. Visiting worship leaders include Hand to Mouth Ministries and the local evangelical church pastor. In addition, the children of the enthusiastic collective worship club plan and lead worship, adding the richness of lively drama, music, prayers and readings. Worship also takes place in the parish church at the major Christian seasons and festivals as well as for Harvest and the end of the school year. These services are well attended, with many parents and families welcomed by the regular church congregation. Worship is evaluated by children and adults, which informs the planning for worship carried out by the headteacher, who is the co-ordinator.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Through the high quality of RE teaching at St Aidan's, children are inspired to respond to their learning in creative and thoughtful ways. Using the Kirklees RE syllabus with additional units on Christianity, the subject offers structured opportunities for learning about and from faith. This is supported by times of reflection and spiritual development. All RE teaching is at least good and often outstanding. This enables children to make excellent progress which exceeds national expectations, and raises RE to be a core subject of the school. RE portfolios of work show the quality of the children's responses to their RE learning, and the range of multi-media outcomes. In Foundation classes, children are also encouraged to explore stories of faith and belief by learning through miniature-world play. RE is enhanced by educational visits to a variety of places of worship. These include a local mosque, a gurdwara, a Buddhist temple and the local Christian churches. Visitors from a range of contrasting world faiths are also invited to discuss their faith with the children. Through its influence in all subjects in the curriculum, RE strengthens the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural teaching. In a lesson using a text from the Qur'an, a Year 5 boy suggested, 'The story teaches that if you show kindness, then others are very likely to be kind to you'. RE also enriches the provision of learning experiences that help children to develop respect and understanding for those of different faiths, cultures and traditions. Additionally RE supports children in considering their own personal beliefs through evaluation of issues of truth, belief, and ethics. RE is co-ordinated effectively by the headteacher and reception class teacher who monitor the teaching and learning and ensure the subject is well resourced. They also support the development of teachers new to teaching RE in a church school, to ensure effective lesson planning and delivery.

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

Senior leaders at St Aidan's, led by the exceptional headteacher, ensure that at the heart of school life is its Christian ethos. This is given vitality by the six chosen gospel values which are the foundations of all decision-making. These gospel values drive forward the school's determination that every child will receive the nurture and support needed to reach their full potential. All school leaders, including the governors, know their school well. They ensure that the Christian distinctiveness of St Aidan's enhances and enriches the school life of every child. Thorough scrutiny by senior leaders and the governing board provides a strategic understanding of school performance. It also ensures that effective and timely action is taken when necessary. Accordingly, the school has taken the necessary steps to act on the three development points from the last inspection. The governing board's values committee specifically scrutinises the effectiveness of the school's Christian character to ensure it continues to have a positive impact. All staff and governors are offered wide-ranging professional development opportunities. The school, as a member of the Yorkshire Anglican Teaching Schools Alliance, has supported the training of aspiring church school headteachers. The school also benefits from links with the Shelley partnership of schools, the Shelley church schools group and the Kirklees church school partnership. Diocesan links support school leaders and also facilitate St Aidan's link with a Christian school in Tanzania. There are strong links with the local church community through the parish priest and the involvement of congregation members in school life. The local Methodist minister also supports St Aidan's through the 'Open the Book' bible project. Mutually beneficial relationships exist between the school and its parents who appreciate the school's 'open door' policy. An active parent-teacher association is raising funds to develop the grounds and a faith reflection area. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2016 St Aidan's CofE VA First School, Skelmanthorpe, HD8 9DQ