

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Denby Church of England Voluntary Aided First School	
Goose Green, Upper Denby, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD8 8UN	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Kirklees
Date of inspection	13 June 2017
Date of last inspection	3 November 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided 107742
Headteacher	Claire Minogue
Inspector's name and number	Lynne Gillions 662

School context

Denby is a small school with 73 pupils on roll from Reception to Year 5. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is well below national averages. In January 2016, the school federated with two other schools. Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to its staffing structure including the appointment of a new executive headteacher and deputy headteacher across the federation.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Denby Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The school is well led by an executive headteacher and deputy, ably supported by staff and governors, who are committed to the Christian vision which underpins school life.
- Christian values of love, kindness, gentleness, patience and joy are recognised by all stakeholders and they make a significant contribution to the exemplary behaviour and progress and achievement which is above national averages.
- Children are nurtured well and feel happy and safe in school and this creates a productive learning environment where they can flourish.
- The supportive relationship with the church makes a strong contribution to the spiritual development of the children.
- The curriculum provides a range of opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures and this leads to a good understanding of diversity.

Areas to improve

- Review the Christian values with all stakeholders to ensure they provide further challenge and support in all areas of school life.
- Encourage children to purposefully discuss spiritual issues and help them to develop a vocabulary which enables them to express their own opinions effectively and make links between what they learn and their own experience.
- Put in place a systematic, robust schedule of monitoring and evaluating the school's performance as a church school which involves all stakeholders and is overseen by foundation governors. Outcomes should identify best practice and areas for development which should feed into the School Development Plan and secure further improvement.

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

The school has a very strong Christian foundation with five core values: love, kindness, patience, gentleness and joy. These values are displayed in school and lived out throughout the whole community. They are demonstrated in the way children are encouraged and supported, they are modelled by the staff and parents recognise the impact they have in enabling their children to achieve their full potential. Some parents spoke of the dramatic progress their children had made since coming to the school and of their belief that this was because of the Christian ethos of the school. The school is now at a point where these values should be reviewed so that further progress can be made in linking them to the pupils' learning behaviours.

Achievement and progress are good and Christian values contribute to the high standards achieved. Children feel safe and enjoy coming to school. 'Happy children learn better.' Vulnerable pupils are well supported by teaching assistants who provide support for academic, social and emotional needs and as a result they make good progress. Parents talk of the impact the school has on building their children's confidence and self-esteem.

Behaviour is outstanding. Parents describe it as 'impeccable' and link it to the school's Christian values. Children are polite and friendly and they care for each other. Consequently, an atmosphere of calm pervades the school and this creates an environment which is conducive to learning. Relationships are strong. There is a sense of teamwork amongst the staff and this in turn encourages children to work together well.

The school provides a range of opportunities to develop children's spirituality. Along with religious education (RE) and collective worship, children enjoy dedicated RE days such as those run by the Hand to Mouth team. There are interactive reflection areas in all classrooms and around school which encourage children to engage with Christian values and ongoing themes. These values make a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children.

Since the last inspection, excellent progress has been made in developing children's understanding of diversity. Visits to different places of worship, visitors in school and some of the work in literacy are helping children to understand other beliefs and cultures. The Epiphany party, with its focus on celebrations around the world, and the link with a Romanian school, where letters were exchanged about Easter, are helping them to appreciate that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. This demonstrates exemplary practice.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a fundamentally important element of school life. It is valued by all members of the school community. Children behave respectfully during acts of worship and participate appropriately. They enjoy helping to lead worship as demonstrated when some children read their own litany prayers on the theme of fathers with responses for all the children. Since the last inspection, an Ethos and Worship Group has been formed and they contribute to the planning and delivery of collective worship. They are now in a position to take on greater responsibility for leading worship, thereby further increasing pupil participation.

It is evident that collective worship has a strong influence in school and what is experienced threads through the whole of school life. However, children need more opportunities to verbalize the impact that it has on them individually so that they are able to make connections between biblical teaching, Christian values and their own lives. Children know the important place that Jesus holds in the Christian faith but their understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is more limited.

Children have some understanding of Anglican practices such as the use of liturgical colours, the seasons of the year and the main Christian festivals. Their knowledge is enhanced by regular visits to the church. The school is very well supported by the vicar who leads worship and works alongside children preparing prayers for their monthly collective worship in church. She also often attends the weekly celebration assembly along with parents.

Prayer is an important part of school life. Children are given a number of opportunities to write their own prayers and put them in the prayer boxes or in the blessing basket. They regularly read prayers in collective worship and in church services. They can also tie a ribbon on the friendship tree when they pray for someone. They would now benefit from more opportunities for spontaneous prayer to further develop their understanding.

Collective worship is planned by the headteacher and deputy and all teachers contribute by leading. Along with the vicar, a visitor from the local evangelical church also regularly leads worship.

Some monitoring of collective worship takes place by staff and pupils. Parents also write comments in a book which indicates how much they enjoy this aspect of school life. There is some governor involvement but this needs to be more established and focused so that they have as full a picture as possible. Then, strengths can be acknowledged and areas for development identified and fed into the School Development Plan.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

School places a high value on RE. Standards are generally in line with national expectations and often higher and children make good progress. Teaching is good and different approaches are used to engage children. In a Year 4 and 5 lesson, different strategies were in evidence such as the use of talk partners and active learning strategies to re-tell a story. The development of skills is discernible in books and in lessons and children show a growing capacity for empathy, interpretation, reflection and analysis.

From the very youngest children, all are encouraged to have enquiring minds. In a mixed Reception and Year 1 class children were challenged to think of a 'puzzling question' that they could ask God. Whilst some responses were focused on themselves other children demonstrated an awareness of more difficult concepts such as 'How did you make space and the sun?' All children would benefit from more opportunities to grapple with spiritual ideas so that they can increase their vocabulary and their capacity to express their own opinions more clearly and draw their own conclusions.

Across school, there is evidence that creative approaches are used in the teaching of RE. Cross-curricular links are made with subjects such as art, design technology and ICT. Differentiation is used in lessons so that all children can access learning and make good progress. During the course of the year, marking has improved and now identifies targets to deepen children's learning. Children are therefore becoming better placed to take greater ownership of their learning.

Children are learning about other faiths and increasing their understanding of diversity. Young children have made models of churches and mosques to compare similarities and differences. They visit the local church and this increases their understanding of Christianity. Children starting to learn about Sikhism are shown photographs of their visit to a Gurdwara to stimulate their thinking. Visits to other places of worship and to Bombay Stores give children an insight into other communities. Such first-hand experiences are invaluable.

Assessment is in place and is beginning to give a picture of progress and achievement. As this system becomes more embedded it would be helpful for staff to moderate standards across classes to ensure consistency.

There are a range of monitoring activities in place which involve the subject leader and senior staff. Some foundation governor involvement would be helpful in monitoring the subject overall.

The subject leader initially worked alongside an experienced colleague to ensure good practice was shared. She is also engaged in appropriate training to further her knowledge and skills. She is leading the subject well and monitoring it appropriately. Consequently, the school is well placed to build on its strengths and move firmly into outstanding practice.

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

The school is well led by a committed headteacher and senior leadership team who work across the federation. Governors have worked hard to secure the future of the school through this federation between three schools which was formally established in January 2016. During this process, all leaders have been keen to ensure that the Christian vision for the school is secure. As a result, Christian values remain at the heart of the school and leaders recognise the impact that they have on achievement, behaviour and pupil welfare. They make certain that that all areas of school life are informed by these values. Consequently, Denby is a school which actively lives out the Christian principles on which it is founded.

Relationships in the whole school community are strong and leaders have established a sense of teamwork so that staff and pupils all work well together. Parents are very supportive of the school and work in partnership to support their children and organise activities to raise funds for school. They are positive about the federation process and rightly recognise that it is offering staff and children opportunities to develop and widen their experience. Indeed, the federation offers good training opportunities which, alongside those from other providers such as the diocese and local authority, are enriching teaching and learning.

The partnership with the church is very positive and all stakeholders speak of the contribution that the local vicar makes to the school. Functions such as the Tea and Tissues event when the church provides tea and a listening ear for new parents who have just dropped off their children at school are really appreciated. This is a mutually supportive partnership between the church and the school and is invaluable in embedding the children into their local community.

Monitoring and evaluating activities take place but as the new governing body becomes established it now needs to put in place a rigorous and systematic schedule to monitor the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school. This should involve all stakeholders and feed into the School Development Plan.

Denby, although judged good overall, has some outstanding practice in place and under its current leadership at all levels has the capacity to move on further.