



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Middleham Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Park Lane
Middleham
Leyburn
DL8 4QX

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Dates of inspection: 16 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 29 June 2011

School's unique reference number: 121614

Headteacher: Jo Dobbs

Inspector's name and number: Geraldine Cooper 696

School context

Middleham CE VA School is a smaller than average primary school serving the rural market town of Middleham and surrounding villages. There are currently 40 pupils on roll all of whom are white British. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is slightly above national average. There have been significant changes in the school since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in 2012. The school roll has dropped dramatically due to the changing demography of the area and this has led to two restructures of staffing. The church is currently in an interregnum.

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

- The dynamic and effective leadership of a headteacher who has a highly developed understanding of church school distinctiveness.
- Strategies for the regular self-evaluation of the school's distinctiveness have been established.
- A clear vision statement of the schools Christian values and ethos which is shared by staff, pupils and governors.
- The nurture of children as individuals ensures that pupils' needs are met effectively and as a result most make good progress.
- The range of opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of cultural diversity through the work involved in gaining the International Schools Award.
- Engaging collective worship which is often pupil led.
- A carefully structured RE curriculum which is responsive to pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding.

Areas to improve

- Develop a strategic approach to governor training to equip the governing body for effective and insightful self-evaluation.
- Expand pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith.
- Enhance pupils' spiritual development through the development of the external environment.
- Embed pupil evaluation of collective worship in order to increase the impact of worship on the school community.

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

Christian values of 'creativity, compassion, community' have, following consultation, been adopted as the core Christian values of the school. Pupils have a sense of ownership of these values because they have been part of the consultation process. Parents, including those who say that they have no Christian affiliation, attribute behaviour and the promotion of their child's academic and social well-being to the Christian ethos of the school. The gap between the achievement of pupils at the school and the national average is narrowing year on year so that more pupils are achieving or exceeding expectation. This too is attributed to the Christian ethos of the school and the individual care that is offered to all pupils. Parents speak very positively of the way that the school is inclusive of all pupils. This is evident in the way that pupils, and their families, receive individual support in accessing all aspects of school life. It is also evident in the way that the school encourages open discussion about faith and belief so that those who do not express a faith feel that their views are valued and respected. Pupil identity is affirmed and aspirations raised through a well-planned curriculum in which spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development is carefully mapped. Pupils enjoy and are excited by the curriculum. However older pupils would benefit from a deeper exploration of some themes in order to further develop their higher order and critical thinking skills. The curriculum enables pupils to make links between their own experiences and those of others, for example, through an emphasis on fair-trade, and this empowers them to demonstrate their Christian values through participation in a range of humanitarian and charitable projects. This extends to the pro-active way in which, through the International Schools Award work, the school enables pupils to engage with peers from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Learning in religious education [RE] and through involvement in the Mettupalayam Project has given pupils an increased understanding, and appreciation of, of religious and cultural diversity. Collective worship provides pupils with an understanding of diversity within Christianity. Pupils do not appear to have an understanding of Christianity as a world faith.

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

Collective worship expands upon and deepens pupils understanding of the three core values of creativity, compassion and community through the thematic exploration of concepts such as forgiveness. Pupils link these themes to the way that they behave and relate to one another both at school and at home and this has a positive impact on their attitudes toward others. There is a clear structure to worship which enables pupils to develop and deliver their own presentations within each half termly theme. This heightens pupils' engagement with worship and enhances self-esteem. Music is a strong feature of worship and all pupils participate with enthusiasm. The school has collaborated with another church school to expand pupils' repertoire of contemporary worship songs which has added to pupils' level of understanding of, and engagement with, Christian teachings about stewardship and equality. Leaders from the parish church and the local Methodist church lead collective worship on a regular basis and children have a clear understanding of Christian practice and teaching. Collective worship complements pupils' learning in RE and this has a clear impact on embedding the understanding of Christianity. This is evident in the way that Key Stage 1 pupils could recount the Easter story and make links between the 'meal that Jesus shared with his friends' and the bread that they had shared as part of collective worship. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the 'Jesus stories' that they knew and about enjoying reading them in class. The school recognises that some pupils consider themselves to be atheists and collective worship leaders ensure that worship is presented in a way which is inclusive and engaging. This leads to very stimulating discussion about deep theological issues such as the existence of God and the relationship between God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Positive relationships with churches in the community ensure that pupils are able to actively engage in key religious festivals which deepens their understanding of their significance. Parents welcome the opportunity to engage in these services and this develops bridges between the church and the community. Collective worship is part of the strategic

monitoring of the School Progress as a Church of England School (SPACES) sub-committee. Reflection journals enable pupils to comment on the impact of collective worship but this is yet to be embedded.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

The headteacher is able to deploy her subject knowledge of RE to ensure that all pupils have access to a structured and challenging RE curriculum. This curriculum consistently links RE, the schools' Christian values and SMSC development. The common links between RE and collective worship enable even the youngest pupils to make a coherent picture of the Christian faith and what it means to believers today. Consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school is achieved because the headteacher teaches all age groups. The governing body, through the SPACES committee regularly monitors teaching and learning in RE. Long term planning makes effective use of the Diocesan Syllabus for RE and pupils are able to describe and explain links between Christianity and the other religions that they have studied. Pupils are able to engage in RE through carefully differentiated lessons which are planned in accordance with the response of pupils to previous learning. This, in conjunction with teaching taking place in mixed age classes, means that pupils are both challenged and able to see what constitutes progress. This enables pupils of all ages to confidently engage in purposeful debate about matters such as the person and character of Jesus. The headteacher has created an environment in which pupils feel safe and confident in expressing their views and this has fostered an inclusive attitude to faith and belief in which pupils are able to explore doubt and disagreement. This, coupled with the wide range of learning experiences, contributes to the pupils' enjoyment and positive response to RE. A wide range of documentary evidence is used to map pupils' learning and achievement and the majority of pupils achieve within the expected outcomes for their age.

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

The headteacher has an insightful knowledge and understanding of the potential impact of the school's distinctive Christian character on behaviour and achievement. This has been shared effectively with the governing body and the staff of the school all of whom have a strong and shared understanding of this vision. This has enabled the school to ensure a stable and effective learning environment for all pupils whilst implementing a radical restructure in 2013, with a further restructure in September 2015, as a consequence of factors outside the school's control. The vision, and the Christian values espoused by the school, have been developed through a collaborative and collegiate approach which engages with all stakeholders. Key Stage 2 pupils, who were part of this process, have a particularly strong allegiance to the school's distinctively Christian values. The establishment of the SPACES committee has ensured that the school's distinctiveness as a Church school is regularly monitored. Committee members regularly visit the school and have developed a means of formally monitoring the school's distinctiveness as a church school. This has led to all governors being proactive in ensuring the future development of the school as a church school. They act as supportive, but critical, friends and continuously encourage the school to develop new strategies to develop the schools distinctively Christian ethos. Although in an interregnum the church continues to support the school through the active involvement of foundation governors particularly in the regular leading of collective worship. The headteacher is an active member of the Swaledale Alliance, for whom she delivered training on church school distinctiveness, and also of the Wensleydale Small Schools Cluster. She regularly attends Diocesan meetings for voluntary aided schools and this is cascaded to the governing body and staff, thus maintaining the focus on raising the impact of the school's distinctiveness on all aspects of pupils' academic, social and spiritual development. It would, however, further enhance the capacity of foundation governors, particularly those new in post, if there were opportunities to engage in training in effective evaluation of church school distinctiveness.