

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Burneston Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address	Burneston, Bedale DL8 2HX		
Date of inspection	16 January 2019	Status of school	Voluntary Aided Primary
Diocese	Leeds	URN	121619

Overall Judgement	How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	Grade	Good
Additional Judgements	The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
	The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Burneston Church of England Primary School is a small, rural primary school with 59 pupils on roll in two classes. The school has a low level of religious and cultural diversity and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below national averages. There has been a recent period of turbulence with changes in staffing and a significant reduction in pupil numbers. The school currently has an acting headteacher.

The school's Christian vision

The school has stated that 'Christian values sit at the core of everything we do. Our vision is for our children to develop creativity, compassion, fellowship, friendship, forgiveness, respect, trust and wisdom during their time with us. These values and their meaning are displayed, discussed and explored in RE lessons, collective worship and throughout curriculum'.

Key findings

- The Christian vision, established by school leaders, impacts positively on relationships, attitudes and behaviour at all levels.
- All members of the school community support the associated Christian values and consider them to be a central aspect of the school's life and journey, though children are not yet confident in connecting them to biblical teaching.
- Children and adults find collective worship to be inclusive and inspiring. It is fundamental to the ongoing development of the school's Christian ethos. Children do not yet have a significant enough leadership role.
- RE contributes positively to children's understanding of Christianity and other faiths, and is helping them to articulate and share their own thoughts and ideas.

Areas for development

- Raise the profile of the school's Christian vision through a process of regular review so that, through its outworking, the school continues to grow and flourish as a church school.
- Seek ways to help children articulate more clearly, with reference to biblical teaching, the role that the school's Christian vision and values can have on attitudes, behaviour and the wider community.
- Explore opportunities to develop and increase children's role in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship, so that they become leaders in promoting the school's Christian vision.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?
Inspection findings

School leaders have worked alongside parents and children to establish a distinctive Christian vision for the school which aims to 'give insight into the Christian faith and encourage its practical outworking in worship, service, values and attitudes'. This vision is underpinned by an associated set of values that shape school life and which are widely shared and understood by the school community. School leaders articulate the vision and values with reference to biblical material, for instance through collective worship during which the values are strongly linked to Bible stories and teaching. Leaders, including governors, refer to the vision when determining school policy, for example in their decision to re-establish RE teaching within the class teacher role, and in the current creation of a spiritual garden to offer children a space for prayer and reflection. The impact of the Christian vision on attitudes can be seen in the harmonious relationships and caring attitudes shown by both children and adults. Parents say that children explain how the Christian values help them to make positive choices about how they behave and relate to others. In particular, children are keen to nominate each other for demonstrating particular values and this is encouraged by staff as a regular feature of collective worship. The school's nurturing environment, based on its vision, enables both children and adults to feel confident in expressing their views. Although the Christian vision is articulated well by school leaders, it is not yet communicated clearly enough within the wider school community, for example through giving it sufficient visual prominence.

Collective worship provides a focal point for all members of the school community, including many parents who attend the weekly 'community worship'. Leaders, including the local vicar, encourage all those who wish to participate fully in worship. As a result, children are comfortable in using prayer and offer to read out examples written by themselves selected from a prayer tree. They respond well to times of reflection and enjoy singing songs that have a clear Christian message. They can explain that the lighting of three candles 'stands for the Holy Trinity, which is the three parts of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. Worship, both in school and in local churches for the main Christian festivals, is supported by the vicar and other church members. Children take a role in re-enacting Bible stories and in producing displays for the church. These opportunities give children opportunities to encounter the teaching of Jesus, to engage with different forms of worship, and also serve to strengthen the relationship between church and school. Whole school worship is complemented by additional class worship during which children learn from Jesus' teaching. When learning about Jesus' parable comparing the kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed, they understand that this can refer to a growth in his followers. They refer to Jesus as 'the light of the world' when explaining the significance of a lit candle. Teachers monitor the impact of collective worship by speaking to groups of children and these comments are used by worship leaders to introduce changes, such as children reading out prayers they have written. In this respect, the area for development from the previous inspection has been met. Despite their apparently mature attitudes, typically children are not as yet given responsibility for taking a more active role in planning and leading acts of worship, nor are they yet offered opportunities to evaluate worship in ways that are meaningful to them.

School leaders, including governors, are proactive in monitoring both the academic progress and spiritual development of learners, including through observing lessons and looking at children's learning. In academic terms, almost all children are making good progress in relation to age-related expectations, including those who are more vulnerable. School leaders have taken steps to provide additional support and resourcing where necessary, for instance in some areas of literacy. In the core areas of learning, a significant proportion of children are exceeding expectations. Children exhibit an openness to discuss moral and spiritual matters, for example when learning about respecting all people and not forming judgements about them or their beliefs based on their appearance. One parental comment represents many in stating that their child 'talks passionately about the Christian values' and that 'her cultural, spiritual and religious development have excelled since joining the school'. This progress is also borne out in children's compassion for others and their desire to help. For instance, through their leadership role on the school council, children are keen to explain that 'as a school, when we think about charity, it makes us want to help others'. As a result, they have taken action in supporting Children in Need and Aquabox and one child has been inspired to donate to the Salvation Army through 'what he learnt about in school'. Children have a growing awareness of those different to themselves, in both a local and global sense, through leaders arranging visitors, such as a storyteller from Kenya, and visits to places of worship including those of other faiths. This is widening children's perspective on the world and helping them to look beyond themselves and their immediate community.

Significant progress has been made in ensuring that RE represents the school's vision and has an impact on both children and adults. RE is now taught by class teachers, which is helping to fulfil the aim of embedding the vision and values through the whole curriculum. Wherever possible, teachers strive to weave spiritual elements into the wider curriculum. An example of this is the teaching of the creation story through the medium of art. In addition, the adoption of the Understanding Christianity materials across the school under the guidance of the RE subject leader has brought a more structured approach to children's learning. As a result children are able to make connections and draw upon prior learning, for example by referring back to studying the crucifixion when discussing how Jesus was judged by people he met. Children display very positive responses in RE lessons and need little encouragement to tackle and discuss important or challenging issues. For instance, children studying Jesus' calling of his disciples to be fishers of men also encounter what it feels like to give up something they value themselves. As they say, 'Jesus might be asking us to do that' and 'Jesus would have made you a better person'. This shows children engaging with Bible passages and interpreting what it might mean for themselves. Through a recent survey, leaders have been proactive in gathering the views of parents concerning the school's Christian vision, its collective worship and RE and have noted that parents would like to know more about what the school does to teach children about other faiths. In relation to this, it is clear that the subject leader ensures that children learn from and about faiths other than Christianity, such as the importance of the Five Pillars to followers of Islam. In addition, the recent visit to a Hindu temple indicates that leaders provide suitable opportunities for learners to develop knowledge and understanding of major world religions. These activities are helping children to respect diversity. The progress of individual children is tracked effectively through a whole-school assessment programme based on 'I can' statements, which helps teachers to judge the impact of units of work. This has led to extra sessions being introduced for younger children with a focus on Bible stories. Children are able to recall some stories, such as the Good Samaritan parable, to explain their understanding of biblical teaching. As yet children do not naturally or spontaneously make links between the Christian vision, its associated values and Bible stories they have encountered, although teachers encourage this through using biblical references both in RE and in collective worship.

Governors ensure that the Christian vision is central to their aims for the future of the school and this is indicated by its prominence on the development plan. As an example, the RE subject leader has attended relevant diocesan training and local network meetings, enabling good practice to be cascaded to other staff. Governors consider the Christian vision to be especially important as the school goes through the process of appointing a new headteacher to lead the school forward. In the meantime, the initiatives introduced and established by the acting headteacher and current staff are enabling children and adults alike to flourish.



The effectiveness of RE is good

Standards of learning in RE are comparable to other subjects. Evidence from the school's RE assessment programme, particularly since the introduction of the Understanding Christianity materials across the school, suggests that the majority of learners have made good progress against unit objectives. A hallmark of lessons in general is the freedom that teachers give learners to discuss questions and express their views, and this is particularly evident during RE sessions where teachers challenge learners to present and justify their opinions. This is deepening children's ability to tackle spiritual and moral issues. Through a well-structured programme of study, children are encountering key elements and beliefs of Christianity and other faiths. Verbal feedback and encouragement given to children is well judged. Although there is a well-developed system for assessing children's overall progress, at times the feedback given to children in their written work is less rigorous.

Acting headteacher

Gavin Hayman

Inspector's name and number

Malcolm Price 627