



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Slaithwaite CofE Voluntary Controlled Junior and Infant School**

Holme Lane  
Slaithwaite  
Huddersfield  
West Yorkshire  
HD7 5UG

#### **Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales**

Local authority: Kirklees  
Dates of inspection: 25 June 2014  
Date of last inspection: February 2009  
School's unique reference number: 107711  
Headteacher: Elaine Bradley  
Inspector's name and number: Nigel Castledine (652)

#### **School context**

This is a dynamic junior and infant school set in extensive well-utilised grounds in a semi-rural location. Smaller than average in size, the school serves a large village with a mixed catchment of mainly private housing. It has a lower than average proportion of children with Special Educational Needs and an average number of children eligible for Pupil Premium funding. A large majority of the children are of White British heritage with a very small proportion having English as an additional language.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Slaithwaite CofE Junior and Infant School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The leadership and clear vision of the headteacher in partnership with senior staff and governors ensures the continuing drive for the best outcomes for every child.
- The supportive and caring relationships between all members of the school community sustain the children's outstanding behaviour.
- The inspirational use of the school grounds nurtures a very positive affinity with God's created world and provides varied calm areas for reflective thought and prayer.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Promote and articulate the particular Christian values of the school in order to recognise and celebrate their impact on school life.
- Establish a formal methodology for the school governors to monitor and evaluate its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England school.
- Take appropriate aspects of collective worship into the school's outdoor environment in order to promote celebration of God's creative world.

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

Because the Christian faith is at the heart of the school's vision and high aspirations for every child, this is a school where its happy, welcoming atmosphere supports good standards of academic achievement underpinned by excellent standards of care and nurture. Verified by recently by Ofsted, children's attainment on a three year trend is good, with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage making outstanding progress. Because in the words of a child, "coming to school is always fun" and there is a real passion shown by the children for their learning, attendance levels are above those for similar schools. Parents and carers express a high rate of satisfaction for all aspects of school life and praise the school for the high quality educational experiences, care and support provided for their children. The school prospectus includes the school's Vision Statement which states "as a church school we promote Christian values whilst respecting all other faiths". This statement would benefit from being expanded to allow for a clearer understanding and celebration of the nature of the core Christian values that nurture the school's life of this exciting school. The environment has a distinct importance in school life and the vibrant immediacy of the exceptional school grounds is an integral part of the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The outdoor provision includes playing areas, sports fields, a natural pond and woodland areas. There are purpose built allotments for children to experience growing plants, a greenhouse, as well as a habitats garden to support environmental education. These are used in ways which celebrate the children's growing knowledge of how to care for God's created world. This focus has supported the school in attaining its Green Flag award which marks out the sustainability of the school and embeds sound ecological principles into the heart of school life. All the children use the grounds each week as part of their learning experiences. A group of children spoke of the calm and peace they feel in working in the outdoor classrooms areas as well the excitement of being so close to nature. A natural next step for the school would be to take its collective worship outside at appropriate times. Outstanding behaviour is seen everywhere at the school and is supported by the exceptional quality of relationships between all members of the school community. This reflects the school's Christian ethos with its emphasis on ensuring mutual care, support and respect. There are opportunities for Christian forgiveness and compassion with a fresh start for children who have contravened rules. Children are very ready to support each other. Examples of this include giving their time as monitors, reception buddies, play leaders, Green Team and school council members, as well as participating in community groups. There are many varied extra-curricular activities at school and children enjoy being part of sports teams and the school choir. The School Council organises special events and helps to raise money for a wide range of charitable causes both local and world-side. The school is linked with the Mustard Seed Project at Misindi Nursery in Uganda as well as providing support for diocesan international projects. These overseas links help the children to gain a vivid insight into the lives of children in other countries and also help them to perceive Christianity as a world religion. In order to ensure children have a comprehensive understanding of other world faiths, Religious Education (RE) includes a study of major world religions and visits to other faith centres such as a local mosque as well as local Christian churches. This is effective, as seen in the ways the children show respect for all faiths and ways of life even though the school population is broadly Christian with a very small minority of children from a contrasting world faith.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective Worship offers quality time for reflection and affirmation of Christian values and principles. Its influence is seen in the ways faith values, beliefs and teachings have relevance within classroom and outdoor learning, as well as in the quality of relationships and the attitudes of the children towards their learning and their lives together. Worship therefore underpins the excellence of educational life at the school. It is led by the headteacher, clergy, the children, staff members and visitors. It provides opportunities for prayer, reflection, learning, affirmation and celebration. It includes a wide variety of styles and subjects and uses

music and song as important ingredients. Scrutiny of evaluations of worship during the SIAMS clearly show the strength of impact and the relevance of collective worship for those present as well as indicating development points for the future. The termly themes are well planned, acting on previous development points. This ensures that collective worship retains a strong relevance to the life of the school and the children's particular spiritual needs and interests. The school's last SIAS suggested seeking the views of parents on church school distinctiveness with collective worship has been part of this focus. Parents spoke of the positive ways in which they perceive the messages of collective worship are absorbed and extended into the children's lives at home. There is a thoughtful school prayer, written by the children after much discussion and preparation, which is used regularly. Other prayers by children are also used alongside the traditional Lord's Prayer. As part of the school's Anglican tradition, the Church year and its festivals are linked into the pattern of collective worship. The children enjoy helping to lead the worship in St James' Church at Christmas, Easter, and on Mothering Sunday. The school also contributes towards the church's Harvest Festival with gifts of food going to the needy. Anglican tradition is also evident in the use of bible stories, worship songs, prayers and music in school liturgy. Appropriate religious artefacts, such as the lit candle on the worship table seen during the inspection, are used to provide a good focal point and create a palpable sense of reverence and anticipation. Each week there is a 'Well Done' assembly to reflect upon and celebrate the good things that have happened during the week, to which parents appreciate being invited. The Vicar is regular in his visits to school both formally to lead worship, and informally to lunch with the children and to join in after-school activities. As another follow-up point from the last inspection, the range of worship leaders has been extended to include ministers from both the Baptist and Methodist churches. A further new initiative has been to work with the Methodist church to extend the school's use of Godly Play in both RE and worship into the setting up of a Godly Play classroom for the community in the church.

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

The headteacher, senior staff and governors know their school outstandingly well. Children commented on how they appreciate that each one of them is known, understood and valued for their contributions to school life. Parents and carers too noted the inclusive nature of the school, with the staff's knowledge of each child ensuring learning is personalised, supportive and relevant. The headteacher, senior staff and governors monitor the children's learning regularly and carefully. They also observe what is happening through school and they sample the children's work and talk with them. Because they carry out this effective scrutiny, they are able to build up a good understanding of the school's development needs, and take necessary actions to push forward their high expectations for the children's progress. As an integral part of this ongoing scrutiny, governors regularly visit the school and monitor its distinctiveness as a Church of England school. This includes the school's outreach in the community, its worship and its RE teaching. This aspect of monitoring now needs to be systematically evaluated so that it can formally become part of the governors' overview of school life and be seen to impact on the effectiveness of the school. The school has good links into the life of the community, and its churches, as well as educational links with other local schools. Recognising the strengths of the headteacher and senior staff, a supporting role has developed for the school within the Local Authority area in working with other school leadership teams and with teachers to secure their improvement. The school has already identified opportunities to extend and develop new links with the Diocese as an area that should be explored. Professional development, linked to performance management, is in place for the staff. The school uses the Local Authority middle leadership development programmes, but there are no links as yet into specific training for future leaders in church schools. Arrangements for RE and Collective Worship meet statutory requirements.