



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Pickhill Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

The Green  
Pickhill  
Thirsk  
YO7 4JL

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Satisfactory

**Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales**

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Dates of inspection: 19 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 4 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 121510

Headteacher: Christine Gabbott

Inspector's name and number: Lynne Gillions 662

#### **School context**

Pickhill Church of England Primary School is a very small school with 32 pupils serving a rural community. All pupils are white British. Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are well below the national average. Very few pupils are on school action and none are on school action plus. Since the last inspection the school has moved out of special measures to a recent Ofsted grading of good. During this period there have been significant changes in staffing and governance.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Pickhill Church of England Primary as a Church of England school are good**

- The commitment and vision of the headteacher, ably supported by governors and staff, has led to considerable improvements in standards and positive outcomes for children.
- Christian values are evident in all areas of school life and make a significant contribution to the pupils' progress and achievement
- The school provides a loving, caring, family environment where children are valued as individuals and given opportunities to flourish and develop their particular gifts.
- Strong links with the church ensure the school is rooted in the local community.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Use the newly formed liturgy group to promote greater pupil ownership in planning and delivering collective worship in school.
- Increase children's experiences of diversity in order to develop a deeper understanding of British cultures.
- Develop a reflective, outdoor area to enhance the spiritual development of pupils and provide an alternative space for creative collective worship

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

The school has a very strong family atmosphere where everyone cares for each other and relationships are strong. Christian values are deeply embedded and everyone recognises that they are the bedrock of school life. They have played a significant part in the drive to raise standards and parents say their children often come home and discuss them. Staff said these values also gave them cause for personal reflection. They are in evidence throughout the school on displays and have been interpreted through art work on canvas, a kindness tree and compassion pledges. Children spoke confidently about the values and how they influence their everyday life. When talking about responsibility they linked it to the story of Jesus overturning the tables in the temple and said, 'you have to know what is right and wrong and you have to face the consequences of your actions'. They said that if you don't forgive people 'it breaks a friendship'. They gave examples of endurance and said when doing schoolwork 'you have to carry on and not be distracted'. Children are self-assured when talking about spiritual matters. Opportunities to develop the children's spirituality are threaded throughout school life most particularly in collective worship and religious education but in a PSHE (personal, social, health education) lesson about dealing with loneliness one child said 'you could talk to God'. This is a school which goes the extra mile for its pupils. During a period of staff turbulence which was having an unsettling effect on the children, the headteacher introduced 'tea with Mrs G' and she visited pupils in their homes, doing some school work with them and then having tea with the family. This has now changed to a weekly after-school booster class for Year 6 who each term go out for a meal with the headteacher and chair of governors. The headteacher sees this as an outward expression of Christian love and care for the children. Parents are extremely positive about the care their children receive. 'My child has come on leaps and bounds due to the nurturing, loving, understanding and adaptable environment.' 'Care here is unique.' Behaviour in school is excellent. Children are polite and helpful and they said, 'we are all friends' and 'there is no bullying in our school'. Staff and children recognise that these high standards are rooted in the Christian values of the school. Children have opportunities to join a range of after-school clubs which operate on a cyclical basis and include a Loaves and Fishes Club which is organised by volunteers from the church. They have an excellent understanding of the local community and they are gaining an understanding of global communities through their link with Ghana. Children have a growing appreciation of other faiths and cultures and their visit to a Hindu temple and the Inter-Faith Centre enriched their comprehension of other faith groups in British society. More such experiences would help children further develop their understanding of diversity.

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

There is a daily act of collective worship and everyone recognises the important role it plays in school life. Children are very focused and their exceptional singing, which regularly includes solos, really enhances the quality of worship. They readily offer suggestions and answer questions during worship and like to play an active part as was evidenced in a dramatic enactment of a Bible story and the reading of prayers. A special table draped with liturgical colours provides a focus for worship and a candle is lit during prayers which are usually led by the children and are sometimes spontaneous. Church has a strong role in supporting collective worship. The vicar leads worship weekly and once a month it takes place in the church. The chair of governors, representatives from the local Baptist and Methodist churches and teaching staff also lead worship and this enriches the children's understanding of different Christian traditions. The newly appointed collective worship co-ordinator has formed a liturgy group made up of children of different ages and they are starting to plan, organise and deliver collective worship in school. With the help of a foundation governor, pupils plan some of the joint church services. Special celebrations are held in the church and the school and church have joined together to deliver the Harvest Festival and Carol Service for the whole village

community. Prayer makes an important contribution to school life and prayers are said at different points during the day. Children are given opportunities to write their own prayers. One child said, 'If I am worried I can pray and God will help me.' Children have an understanding of some Anglican practice such as liturgical colours, celebrations and the church year. They have a growing understanding of the Trinity describing it as 'three in one' and saying 'the Holy Spirit influences us in everything'. Children talked about how collective worship influenced their lives and said after hearing the story of Adam and Eve and the serpent they recognised the importance of listening to people who you know and trust. Planning for collective worship is undertaken by the headteacher in consultation with the incumbent but this responsibility is passing to the new co-ordinator. Monitoring and evaluating takes place and involves pupils, staff and governors. This is used to improve practice, for example, following a learning walk the special table was changed and a carpet was provided for the younger children.

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

The school has come through a difficult period with commendable success. 'The culture has been transformed.' This is as a result of the Christian commitment and dedication of the headteacher who is ably supported by governors and staff who together have led the school to a place where it is valued and cherished by the local community. Parents recognise that the headteacher's personal faith is outworked in all she does for the school and describe her as 'a remarkable woman' who they hold in 'massive respect'. The outstanding commitment of the whole leadership team is a strength of the school. Standards and progress are now good and the school is totally integrated into the village community. Leaders recognise that Christian values have played an enormous part in this process. Following a recent good Ofsted report, the school held a thanksgiving service in recognition that 'it was not just of our own doing'. Governors regularly visit school and since the last inspection a very effective system of monitoring and evaluating the school's performance as a church school is now in place. This includes collective worship evaluations, learning walks and meetings with children and staff. Reports from these activities go to the governing body and areas for development are fed into the School Development Plan. Governors see their role as equally supportive and challenging and they ensure 'the talk is walked'. The very close link with the church is another strength of the school and helps establish a strong Christian ethos. This mutually supportive relationship is greatly valued by all stakeholders. One parent said the church provided 'a rock, a foundation and a spiritual resource for the school'. Another said that it embedded the school into the community. School is now able to distribute leadership more effectively as is shown in the recent transfer of responsibility for collective worship and religious education from the headteacher to another member of staff.

SIAMS report November 2014 Pickhill Church of England Primary School, Thirsk, YO7 4JL