

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Fountains Earth, Lofthouse Endowed Church of England Primary School

Address Fountains Earth, Lofthouse, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG3 5RZ

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

Overall grade

Requires Improvement

The impact of collective worship

Good

School's vision

One body has many parts. We all belong and have a part to play. Corinthians 12:27

Learning and Growing Together

Learning

Develop a lifelong love of learning – Wisdom

We take pride in everyone's achievements and successes – Respect

Growing

We encourage and embrace challenge – Courage

We learn to make responsible choices and become independent – Responsibility

Together

We share our Christian Values within our communities – Koinonia

We nurture and care for each other - Compassion

Key findings

- Strong and supportive relationships amongst pupils and adults create a nurturing community. Staff work well as a team and older pupils act as role models for younger ones.
- Senior leaders and governors can articulate the school's Christian vision and its importance in the school community's context but pupils and some staff cannot. Pupils and adults express limited knowledge of the vision's biblical foundations.
- Leaders have systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's Christian vision but these have been recently introduced so the impact is not yet seen.
- Collective worship is enriched by regular pupil leadership and by strong links with the local churches.
- Recent revision of the religious education (RE) curriculum deepens pupils' understanding of theological ideas. Opportunities for spiritual development in the wider curriculum are not embedded.

Areas for development

- Clarify the school's Christian vision and its biblical foundation. Ensure that pupils, staff and governors understand and articulate its importance in all aspects of school life.
- Embed effective monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's Christian vision in order that the Christian vision fully shapes school development.
- Establish a shared school understanding of spirituality so that opportunities for spiritual development in the curriculum are identified and taken.

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

Fountains Earth welcomes and nurtures pupils within a caring family atmosphere. The vision of growing together is seen in action as pupils of all ages learn through studying and playing together. Older pupils actively care for younger pupils and act as role models. There are opportunities for each child to contribute ideas and to lead, for example, as a house captain or in the eco-club. Pupils enjoy school and say they feel safe and that their teachers listen to them.

The school is going through a challenging period of change with a new staffing structure and the expansion of the federation. Senior leaders and governors can articulate the school's Christian vision and associated values which were chosen several years ago. However, pupils and some staff cannot readily say what the school's Christian vision is. Nor can they explain the biblical foundations on which it is based. Following diocesan training, the headteacher has brought fresh impetus to the governors' evaluation of the school as a church school. However, since systems for monitoring and evaluation have been introduced recently, their impact is not yet seen.

Leaders and governors are determined that pupils and staff should gain every advantage from belonging to the federation. As a result, recent changes in the staffing structure have strengthened teaching and learning by reducing isolation and enhancing teamwork. The headteacher is highly committed to driving improvement in teaching and learning through effective continuing professional development. Bringing staff together across the federation to learn and work together amplifies the beneficial impact. The federation enables staff to share responsibilities, strategies, training and the moderation of standards. The school is well supported through partnerships with the diocese, the Harrogate and Rural Alliance and the local authority. The federation also provides opportunities for pupils to combine across the schools for activities such as sports day and secondary transition day. Through these events, pupils enjoy the increasing sense of belonging to a wider community.

The wellbeing of every member of the school community is a high priority. Leaders clearly understand the challenges to mental health for scattered farming communities during the pandemic. This understanding effectively underpins the school's drive to support the wellbeing of adults and children. The school works with external agencies to support the welfare of staff and pupils and also to increase staff expertise in this area. Staff value being part of a supportive team. Vulnerable pupils receive teaching and support tailored to their needs which enable them to gain confidence in learning. Parents find school staff very approachable and talk of communication with school being 'second to none'. They appreciate the school's quick and effective response in dealing with any concerns that arise.

Leaders have introduced a balanced, structured curriculum which aims to broaden pupils' experiences and understanding of the wider world. This includes a strong personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. The curriculum is planned effectively to ensure that, across the wide range of ages in the class, teaching and learning are suitable for each pupil. Sequenced learning helps pupils to make progress. Topics include overarching questions which challenge pupils to interpret what they have learned to draw their own conclusions. This use of 'big questions' is at an early stage so there are insufficient planned opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum.

Pupils also learn to look beyond themselves by supporting a range of charities. They enjoy fundraising, for example, to support young people's mental health through #HelloYellow Day.

In keeping with a whole school curriculum review, the RE programme of study has been revised effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. The school now enhances the local authority RE syllabus with a resource called Understanding Christianity. Staff have been well supported in its use by diocesan training and advice. Governors and leaders value RE. As evidence of this, RE is well resourced and has sufficient time allocated to it. The new RE curriculum is already making a difference to pupils' understanding of theological concepts. For example, pupils talked with interest about agnosticism in the context of learning about creation. Pupils' general knowledge of the Bible is less developed. Before the restrictions of the pandemic, pupils' experience of faiths other than Christianity was enhanced through a visit to a mosque.

Collective worship, in class and in the hall, is relevant and engaging. It is planned on a theme taken from the school's chosen Christian values combined with an element from the school's behaviour code. In the week of inspection this was courage and honesty. As a result of collective worship, pupils can talk about personal situations where they have been able to take courage to do something difficult. Pupils are responsible for leading the weekly celebration

collective worship. They enjoy doing so and gain valuable experience in leadership and engaging adults and children in worship. They show respect and maturity whether in lighting the candles, leading responses or in encouraging the youngest pupil to join in. Pupils' views are listened to and produce change, for example, in the choice of songs. Pupils choose and write prayers and join together in set school prayers. However, opportunities for silence and personal reflection and prayer are missed. Nevertheless, parents notice that their children initiate discussion at home on questions about values and beliefs. Until the lockdown, most parents regularly attended weekly collective worship in school, appreciating sharing in their children's experiences.

Collective worship is enriched by the strong partnership with the local Anglican and Methodist churches. Until lockdown, pupils attended services in the parish church to mark the church's year, for example, Harvest Festival. Before the pandemic, the vicar and Methodist minister alternated in leading collective worship weekly in school. This resulted in links with the churches being strengthened during the pandemic, partly through a buddying scheme between the parish church and families. Even though lockdowns disrupted worship in school, the vicar continued to provide Bible stories and worship through creative videos. As a result, pupils engaged with Bible stories and prayer by viewing these videos at home during lockdown and now in school.

Leaders recognise many of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a church school and are passionate about 'learning and growing together'. They have taken steps to address areas for development but changes are not embedded and so it is too soon to see the impact.

Contextual information about the school

Date of inspection	10 November 2021	URN	121561
Date of previous inspection	13 October 2014		
School status	Voluntary controlled primary school	NOR	11
Name of MAT/Federation	Federation of Fountains Earth and St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary Schools		
Diocese	Leeds		
Headteacher	Nicola Thornber		
Pupil profile	The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages.		
	The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages.		
Additional significant information (if needed)	This rural school is much smaller than the average sized primary school. It is organised in one mixed age class. The headteacher was appointed six months before this inspection.		
Inspector's name	Eleanor Benson	No.	920