

# Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

## Gunnerside Methodist Primary School

**Address** Gunnerside, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL11 6LE

### Christian vision

We come to school to learn, explore and grow. In our small community, we all work together to make a better school, make connections and to prepare for our future. Values of love, kindness, hope and peace help to guide us on this journey. Our school song, 'One More Step Along The World I Go', celebrates all that we do.

### School strengths

- The Christian vision is effective in embracing Gunnerside School's rural context and is the lynchpin in ensuring pupils' flourishing.
- Staff, at all levels, seek out and employ innovative ways which support pupils' good spiritual development.
- The school's Methodist roots are strongly embedded by the close links with the local chapel and a well-planned religious education (RE) curriculum.
- As a result of the pupils' understanding of the vision, they treat one another with respect and kindness, enhancing their good mental health and wellbeing.
- The school is committed to serving its community. The whole staff team is effective in responding to the specific needs of this exceptional locality. Therefore, the Christian vision underpins respectful and trusting relationships that secure the fruitful partnership between the two schools of Gunnerside and Reeth in the federation.

### Areas for development

- Embed a deeper understanding of the Christian values across the Gunnerside School community so they support the vision even further.
- Empower pupils to become effective agents for change in order that they can make a difference both locally and globally.

## Inspection findings

The vision at Gunnerside is deeply rooted in the school's context and therefore highly successful in enabling flourishing. This is achieved by embracing Methodist principles and redressing the balance between the beautiful but isolated location in Swaledale. The school references the many journeys that are prevalent in the Bible. However, each individual's personal journey with God is the most poignant lynchpin. It is the Christian theology underpinning the vision. The four thoughtfully considered Christian values of love, kindness, hope and peace are supported by biblical verses. Leaders explained the values as driving the vision by 'steering what we do and shaping lives'. However, the gospel roots of the values are currently not fully recognised by the whole Gunnerside school community.

The school's vision underpins the whole curriculum enabling all to flourish. Additional opportunities ensure that pupils gain a broader perspective of the world. Likewise, the school makes effective use of its rural location with both planned and spontaneous activities. This boosts pupil wellbeing and provides rich spiritual moments, such as reflecting while lying down in a buttercup meadow. The vision encourages pupils to make connections and explore therefore reflection is a regular focus across the school day. Frequent opportunities are provided that develop pupils spiritually. The vision is lived out through bold decisions. It also facilitates a changing cycle of varied extra-curricular activities which enhance pupils' learning experiences. For example, purchasing head torches to extend fell running sessions. Many instances were shared by staff and parents of the school 'going the extra mile'. This is particularly significant in aiding pupils with specific needs. Targeted intervention, be it for wellbeing or academic support, ensures that all stay on track on their journey to flourishing. Pupils' readiness for secondary school is used as a benchmark in assessing the vision's success for their life journey.

Collective worship is shaped by the school's Christian vision. It is a valued part of the school day and played a significant role in bringing the community together during Covid lockdowns. Pupils grow spiritually as a result of uplifting and reflective moments shared through varied content and routines, such as worship outdoors. Collective worship embraces practices to ensure that it is both invitational and inclusive. For example, during times of prayer, those present have an alternative option to take a moment to reflect instead. Several parents expressed their appreciation of the school's considerate approach, thankful that they were not 'preachy'. They felt that this provided their children with informed, personal choices about faith. The school is well supported by both the local Methodist and Anglican churches. Pupils enjoy the variety, giving them a broader experience of different Christian practices. Methodist traditions are celebrated in worship, such as pupils being encouraged to 'sing the faith'. The church year and Christian values provide the basis of themes in worship. Both leaders and clergy help develop staff skills thus enriching the sacred experience. Pupils enjoy taking an active role in different aspects of worship. However, they do not have regular, scheduled opportunities to plan and lead worship independently.

Making connections and community are key elements of the vision. This vision is shared with a community school. The vision that unites the two schools has produced a highly advantageous collaboration. It serves as a blueprint for other reciprocal partnerships such as with local schools and nearby churches. The vision underpins exceptionally positive relationships across the schools. The Christian values of kindness and love are lived out by staff and pupils alike. They are used in a practical way to enable pupils to live well together. Therefore, on those rare occasions when there is conflict, values aid reconciliation and forgiveness. The school's personalised approach enhances the good mental health and wellbeing of the whole school community. The individual is celebrated for who they are creating a strong culture of respect, where everyone is treated equally. The vision drives curriculum decisions which help pupils' understanding of the wider world. As a result, they are respectful of difference and key experiences develop their positive understanding of diversity. There is also a keen focus on ensuring access for all. 'Going the extra mile' and 'couldn't do enough' were phrases used by parents to illustrate the school's inclusive and supportive approach.

Pupils have a good understanding of justice, recognising fairness and the rights and needs of the individual. They referenced the work of David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg to illustrate people who have made a

difference. Examples were shared of pupils engaging in social action initiatives. However, currently pupils do not have regular opportunities to develop their skills and experiences to become effective agents for change.

Leaders and governors ensure that RE has an appropriate profile across all key stages. The RE curriculum meets the requirements of a Church school. Pupils from both Gunnerside and the community school are taught together. Those pupils registered at Gunnerside School access additional elements appropriate to their Methodist faith. The vision is at the heart of the RE curriculum and responds well to the school's isolated location. It is successful in developing knowledge and experience. Therefore, pupils spoke animatedly about visits to mosques and were respectful in describing their learning of world faiths. Planned topics on Methodism are valuable in growing pupils' understanding of Gunnerside's Christian foundation. The frequent use of the nearby chapel enhances learning in the subject, as does insightful support from local clergy. The school actively seeks out opportunities to make links with its Methodist roots. For example, a recent whole school walk coincided with Aldersgate Day. This prompted a focus on the life and work of John Wesley and his own journey through the Dales. A teacher described RE as giving pupils 'a time to think for themselves, a moment to express something that isn't right or wrong.' Exploring big questions and the innovative use of the outdoors, greatly enhances pupils' spiritual development. The subject's continued development is secured through key training and the impact of effective monitoring by leaders and governors.

The inspection findings indicate that Gunnerside Methodist Primary School is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information					
School	Gunnerside Methodist Primary School				
URN	121542	Pupils on roll	25	VA/VC/Academy	VC
Circuit	Darlington				
Federation	Reeth and Gunnerside Schools				
Headteacher	Gordon Stainsby				
Chair of governors	Brenda Price				
Inspector	Jo Williams			No.	863
Date of Inspection	13 September 2023				