CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

The **Methodist** Church

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Birkenshaw Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Station Lane
Birkenshaw
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD11 2JE

Previous SIAMS grade: N/A

Diocese: West Yorkshire

Local authority: Kirklees

Date of inspection: 13th January 2015

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's unique reference number: 107730

Headteacher: Rebecca Martin

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby 137

School context

Birkenshaw became a primary school in 2012 after being a nursery and first school. It is much larger than most other primary schools and the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities are below average. Following the appointments of the headteacher and deputy headteacher a new leadership team was established in 2013/14. There have also been changes in staffing and governance, both of which are now stable.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Birkenshaw as a Church of England school are good

- The commitment of headteacher, staff and governors in creating an effective and distinctive church school.
- The impact of the Christian character of the school on the personal and academic development of pupils.
- The effect of the worship group on the range, quality and impact of worship on the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the school vision, aims and policies fully reflect the distinctive Christian character of the school.
- Ensure the school self-assessment fully and accurately portrays the practice and distinctiveness present in school.
- Extend the spiritual journey of pupils through greater roles in the delivery of worship that reflects the extent of their involvement in planning and evaluation.
- Ensure the newly appointed foundation governor has the support and knowledge to effectively carry out her statutory duties.

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

The school has a caring and supportive ethos that reflects Christian values and illustrates 'A Christian ethos is at the heart of all we do'. Children understand the distinctive Christian character of the school. They readily relate the wide selection of Christian values in school, explaining that they are 'what Jesus wants us to do'. The Christian ethos and character create a caring community. This is reflected in relationships between adults and children as well as the 'Buddy system' in which older children care for younger. The care for each other ensures that relationships and behaviour are good. Behaviour is maintained through well-understood strategies. Consequence ladders provide opportunities for children to reflect on the choices of their actions. Each child is valued as an individual and known to each member of staff. Adults understand the importance of Christian values in school and model these in their daily lives and teaching. For example, Christian love drives their desire that all children should reach their potential through inclusive teaching and high expectations. They encourage perseverance so that children successfully face challenge. They are respected by and care for their children. Although data indicates that some groups are making good progress or better, generally progress in key stage two is currently not as good. However, rigorous monitoring and target setting data indicates that attainment is improving. Children understand how Investors in Pupils and class targets support their learning. The termly learning challenge in which they produce a power point presentation or model related to the current topic enables parents to share in their children's learning. This is supported by the 'Open Futures ' initiative that develops higher level thinking skills in pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school because of cross curricular links with religious education and worship and the learning opportunities developed in the rich variety of environments in the school grounds. The newly revised RE syllabus has a high profile. It has been successfully integrated to ensure that teaching reflects the local needs of the children as a mainly white community within a culturally diverse wider community. Attainment is judged to be in line with other core subjects. Children are developing a good awareness of the links between Abrahamic religions. They recognise similarities and differences between other major world faiths, such as the Sikh Mool Mantar and the Christian Apostle's Creed. Throughout the school, values trees, crosses and the school prayer remind everyone of the distinctiveness of the school. This is supported by a number of interactive RE displays with reflective questions and biblical links such as 'Questions to ask God' 'Things God made' and a Peace Tree. Children understand the need to care for each other, for others and the environment. Each class is involved in supporting a less well off child in another part of the world through Action Aid. They regularly hold a care day cake sale to ensure the consistent funding for these children, with whom they communicate and send other gifts.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to life of school by meeting and reflecting together as a school spread across a large school site. Its timing at the end of the day also reiterates the togetherness of the school. Themes and messages are referred to and discussed the following day. Worship is underpinned by a recently reviewed and effective policy. One of the strengths of worship is the worship group who are responsible for termly planning and evaluation. Each class is responsible for monitoring worship each week. This group of staff, foundation governor, vicar and pupils, meet to review the previous cycle of themes and ensure continuing development based on the needs and views of children. Pupils experience a range of Christian leaders from the Anglican and Methodist churches, the Salvation Army and 'Hand to Mouth Puppets'. Pupils gain a wide experience of Christian worship. Input from an Imam from the Kirklees Faith Forum gives opportunities to understand the links between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The school has strong links with St Paul's church. Regular visits from the vicar and the use of church for festival services extend children's knowledge and understanding of Bible stories and their relevance to life today. The links are reinforced by the use of the same songs in school and church and the school choir singing at family services. Pupils create a respectful and reflective atmosphere for worship and are engaged by leaders who make good use of resources. As well as times for reflection during worship, pupils are dismissed with a leaving

thought to reinforce the worship theme. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the Trinity and life of Jesus. They recognise that Jesus was a Jew and his disciples were the first Christians. The also recognise and explain the Christian symbolism of the cross, the candle, the fish and the dove. Children often contribute prayers, drama and readings in school and church worship. However, the school has recognised they are capable of greater involvement in delivering as well planning and evaluation. Children understand the role of prayer, recognising different positions to pray as well as the purpose 'to talk to God and say thank you, sorry or ask for help'. They also recognised that ' although God always listens we may not realise that He has answered us'. In addition to class prayer books created by pupils, the Prayer Net in the hall gives pupils the opportunity to write and share prayers. As part of a wider worshiping community, the school created a 'Field of Poppies' in the school grounds. Each poppy was dedicated to a family member or local resident who died in the Great War and was the focus for a community Remembrance Service.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the Christian character of the school that is shared by all. She leads a team that strives to provide successful achievement by all within a Christian environment, to become well-rounded individuals. They are respectful of others and develop the skills to be part of a multi cultural society. The school has begun to ensure that the aims and policies of the school reflect the distinctive Christian character of the school, However, this is not yet fully embedded within self evaluations, some of which do not accurately reflect the good practice and Christian character that drive the daily life of the school. Governors are proactive in the life of the school. They have a good understanding of the distinctive Christian character of the school through visits and regular reports. Foundation governors ensure the high profile of worship, RE and Christian ethos are developed. Their reports are standing agenda items at governors meetings. These provide the knowledge for governors to challenge and support the Christian ethos of the school. They are very aware of the immediate local culture as well as the wider local culture and ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in a multicultural society. Governors' awareness of succession planning has supported the appointment of a new foundation governor. It has also developed staff confidence in leadership roles. There is now a developing culture of staff taking leadership initiatives rather than them being directed to development points. Class and subject area links with governors enable staff and pupils to recognise the active roles of governors and how these reinforce the Christian ethos of the school. Staff comment how they are valued and supported by the leadership team and governing body, illustrating Christian values in action. Positive action, such as staff meetings held in different parts of the school, ensure that staff are aware of events throughout school and reinforce the community feel. Parents recognise the community spirit of the school and the impact of the ethos on the personal and academic development each pupil. Typical of the many positive comments by parents is 'this caring school encourages children to become well rounded young adults with a strong set of morals and values for life' and 'the school recognises the uniqueness of Christianity and other faiths.' Parents also support the school through listening to children read and involvement with Friends of Birkenshaw School (FOBS). The school has strong links with the local community and church through shared involvement in events such as the Remembrance Day Service and Christmas lights switch on. Staff and pupils benefit from links with the 'Ten Schools' partnership.'