



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

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

### St James Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Hallfield Lane  
Wetherby  
LS22 6JS

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Satisfactory

**Current SIAMS grade:** Good

**Diocese:** West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: Leeds

Dates of inspection: 19 October 2015

Date of last inspection: April 2012

School's unique reference number: 107995

Executive Headteacher: Pam Edwards, Head of School: Ben Williams

Inspector's name and number: Lynne Gillions 662

#### School context

Since the last inspection, St James has joined in a federation with Scholes (Elmete) Primary School and now has an executive headteacher and a head of school. There have been significant changes to staffing and the governing body. The school has 83 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with the national average while eligibility for the pupil premium is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language are slightly below national averages.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St James Church of England Primary as a Church of England school are good

- School leaders are committed to developing the school and, this has resulted in significant improvement in attainment, progress and attendance since joining the federation in September 2012. Results are now much closer to national averages in Key Stage 2 and above in Key Stage 1.
- Christian values such as peace, thoughtfulness and perseverance are explicit and influence all aspects of school life. They make a strong contribution to the high standards of behaviour and the improved achievement of pupils.
- Children are well nurtured and this means they are happy, secure and eager to learn.
- The school engages well with families to break down barriers to learning and enable children to flourish.
- The school environment makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

#### Areas to improve

- Increase children's awareness of different Christian traditions both locally and globally.
- Develop pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures by visiting different places of worship and engaging with more people of other faiths.
- Increase pupils' understanding of the Christian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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

St James is on a journey of improvement to secure the best possible outcomes for its pupils. Christian values are fundamental in this process and all stakeholders agree that they have played an important part in raising standards in all areas of school life. They are on display throughout the whole school and are linked to biblical quotes and quotations from famous people making it very clear that this is a school with a Christian foundation. Values such as compassion, respect and responsibility underpin everything that the school seeks to achieve and they are 'what set us apart'. Each half term there is a focus on a particular value and this is giving children a clear understanding which they link to their own experience. Perseverance is the current focus and children gave examples of persevering in lessons and in their leisure activities. They are referred to in collective worship, religious education and in other areas of school life such as when managing behaviour. Because they are made explicit, children are challenged to apply them in their own lives. This has resulted in excellent behaviour in school and strong, supportive relationships between all members of the school community. Since joining the federation, there has been a 3 year trajectory of improvement meaning that children are now making good progress and, from a low baseline, are now above national standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and are now much closer to national averages at Key Stage 2 than 3 years ago. Throughout the federation process the school has strived to safeguard its Christian ethos. The school is distinctive because it retains a focus on the teachings of Jesus and the church. 'We care for each other because God cares for us.' It is keen to nurture and support children and engages with children and their families well before school age. 'The way children are nurtured makes a huge impact, from the day they come through the door as toddlers.' It supports children with specific interventions to meet individual needs. This was reflected in the improved mathematics results at Key Stage 2. Relationships in school are trusting and very supportive and there is a strong team spirit and sense of togetherness. School has a calm, working atmosphere and behaviour is excellent. Older children support younger children in a variety of ways including the playground pals scheme. Children are given opportunities to explore spirituality in collective worship and RE but it also offers children opportunities for spiritual engagement in interactive spaces around school which focus on children's experiences. So, children in Years 5 and 6 can express their fears and concerns about going on a residential visit by squeezing stones to represent those fears and then dispersing them in water. In a communal area, children can consider their fears or things they had done wrong and use bubbles to blow them away. These areas are used by groups and individuals. The Hand to Mouth Team visit school and help children, through a range of activities, to engage with spiritual issues. Children were exploring the Lord's Prayer in this way. Staff have also participated in 'Inspire', a spiritual reflection with the team. Children are encouraged to reflect and think for themselves and demonstrate the ability to ask challenging questions about faith. They enjoy religious education describing it as 'creative' and 'fun'. They have an understanding of Christianity but need to experience a wider range of Christian traditions both locally and globally. Pupils show some understanding of the major faiths but would benefit from more practical engagement with people of other faiths and by visiting different places of worship. They are, however, respectful of other faiths and cultures and understand the value of learning about them and comparing different beliefs.

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

Collective worship is a highly valued part of school life and has improved since the last inspection. It is a time when the school comes together and 'we are all as one'. Children enjoy worship and participate appropriately. They willingly answer questions and participate at the front. During worship they enter calmly, behave respectfully, listen attentively, sing heartily and reflect on what they hear. Each half term there is a focus on a specific Christian value and this is giving children a clear understanding of the value and its application in their lives. The focus on perseverance is encouraging children to keep trying and they spoke freely of how it is helping them both in lessons and in their leisure activities. Biblical teaching is an

integral part of worship and this is increasing children's understanding of the Christian view of God. In a discussion in class about soldiers losing their lives in the First World War, one child spontaneously compared it to Jesus giving up his life for others on the cross demonstrating that what they hear in worship is applied in other contexts. Each worship time begins with the Anglican welcome 'God is here, His Spirit is with us' and children have some understanding of other Anglican traditions such as liturgical colours and symbols but they would benefit from more exposure to other expressions of Christianity. Special celebrations are held in the church. Members of the church deliver collective worship weekly and all members of the teaching staff also take a lead. Children have an opportunity each week to plan and deliver their own collective worship and this is helping to build their confidence and increase their understanding of faith. Faith is also expressed through social action such as fund raising for charities and hosting a Christmas lunch for the community. Children understand the value of prayer and reflection to people of faith. They are given opportunities to write prayers, to read prayers and sometimes they offer their own extemporaneous prayers in collective worship. They also say prayers at other parts of the day and when on residential visits. Indeed on a visit to a busy London restaurant pupils spontaneously said grace before their meal. Collective worship celebrates the life of Jesus and pupils are aware of his centrality to the Christian faith but they are not confident in their understanding of the Christian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Monitoring and evaluating collective worship is undertaken by pupils, staff and governors. This has become more formalized and the new system needs to become systematic and embedded so that it leads to further improvements.

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

The school has undergone radical and rapid change in the last three years since becoming part of a federation. The school is now led by an executive headteacher and a head of school who along with the leadership team and governors are passionate about moving the school forward whilst keeping its Christian foundation strong. During this time, the School Development Plan has prioritised its improvement as a church school in recognition that this was fundamental to its progress in other areas such as achievement and behaviour. The leadership team have given strong direction, supported by the federation, and as a result, this is a school which has made significant progress and is now able to offer its pupils a good education in the context of its Christian foundation. Leaders ensured that all stakeholders were consulted about the Christian values of the school and they recognise the impact these have had on the upward trajectory in standards over the last 3 years and in the improved attendance and behaviour which is now in evidence. They appreciate the dedication and hard work of the staff that has helped bring this about and they are keen to develop and train them so that this trend continues. Leaders ensure that Christian values make a positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils and are incorporated into all areas of school life. The church offers a positive partnership with the school through its involvement on the governing body, its contribution to collective worship and with some volunteer support. Leaders have worked hard to engage with parents and they recognise how much the school has improved since federation. There are strong links with the local Children's Centre who have supported the school in developing First Steps, provision for 2 year olds and the toddler group, so that the school can begin to develop supportive relationships with families as early as possible. Leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance as a church school and have introduced a system which is more evidence based. This needs to become a systematic and embedded element of the whole school improvement cycle. This is a school on a journey and all stakeholders are positive about its progress. Hard work and commitment on the part of leaders, staff and governors have resulted in a school which is loving, caring and aspiring, where children enjoy learning and of which all stakeholders are proud.

SIAMS report Oct 2015 St James CE Primary, Hallfield Lane, Wetherby LS22 6JS