



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

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

### Ackworth Howard Church of England VC Junior and Infant School

Station Road  
Low Ackworth  
Pontefract  
WF7 7HH

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Satisfactory

**Current SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: Wakefield

Dates of inspection: 14 June 2016

Date of last inspection: May 2012

School's unique reference number: 130977

Headteacher: Lisa Metcalfe, Executive Headteacher: Emma Jones

Inspector's name and number: Lynne Gillions 662

#### School context

Ackworth Howard has 201 pupils on roll. Most pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is well below average as is the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by Education Health Care Plans is just below average. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing including a new headteacher and recently an executive headteacher covering during the unforeseen absence of the substantive headteacher.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ackworth Howard Church of England Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of the substantive headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors and the executive headteacher, has helped to thoroughly embed the Christian values of trust, forgiveness, friendship and compassion so that they are lived out in all areas of school life. This results in high achievement, excellent behaviour and a supportive, caring culture.
- Children are happy, well nurtured and show respect for each other and this enables them to learn effectively and express their opinions confidently in a safe environment.
- Reflective areas in classrooms and the opportunities to ask big questions encourage children to think for themselves and offer personal responses to a range of topics.
- Pupils now have a greater role in planning, leading and evaluating collective worship.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation, overseen by governors, leads to sustained improvement.

#### Areas to improve

- Broaden children's understanding of different expressions of the Christian faith and invite leaders from other Christian denominations to lead collective worship.
- Develop creative ways of exploring spirituality and prayer and offer opportunities for spontaneous prayer as well as the more formal opportunities already established.

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

This is a school where Christian values are explicit and embedded and all members of the school community recognise the contribution they make to all aspects of school life. Compassion, friendship, forgiveness and trust are the school's key values but other Christian values are threaded into the curriculum and collective worship. Children embrace these values and express them in their lives. Parents spoke of their young children talking about perseverance and compassion at home. Children understand that they need to demonstrate them in practice in order 'to become better people' and 'help to make our school a happy place'. Stakeholders recognise the contribution they make to the high standards of progress and attainment which are generally above national averages. They also recognise that because there is an emphasis on reflection in collective worship and in the reflection areas, this encourages children to reflect on their work throughout the curriculum. Children are encouraged to demonstrate Christian values and they enjoy being rewarded when they have put one of the values into practice by having their names put on a dove in the hall. Relationships in school are strong and supportive. Children work together well and are polite to each other. Behaviour is excellent and is conducive to effective learning. Expectations of good behaviour are linked to the Christian values. Year 6 children support the younger children and act as good role models. Parents particularly value this arrangement and say how much their younger children look up to the older ones and how they can be very helpful in helping younger children settle into school. Relationships between staff and pupils are characterised by trust. 'You can rely on the teachers and each other so I feel safe.' Children are cared for well and measures are put in place to support specific children. The Me Group effectively supports children in building up their confidence and self-esteem. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is strong. They have opportunities to explore spirituality and reflection areas in all the classrooms provide spaces where children can express their thoughts and ask big questions. In a Year 5 area focused on hope children's responses varied from 'I hope to become a triathlete' to 'I hope there are no more wars'. One child had written a prayer which included, 'I hope that people will have moments that will stay with them forever.' Children are encouraged to ask difficult questions and this is helping them to develop an understanding of the complexity of faith. In Year 2, one child asked, 'Why did God make a rich part of the world and a poor part?' In a Year 6 RE lesson, children grappling with the subject of asylum seekers and refugees showed a capacity to engage thoughtfully and analytically with the issue. Pupils have a very good understanding of other faiths and cultures. They greatly benefit from visitors coming into school and from visits to places of worship such as the synagogue and mosque. They also regularly visit their own parish church as part of their religious education. Children enjoy their RE lessons and activities such as the multi-cultural week motivate them and enhance their learning. They know that it is important to respect others and how they live and they can recognise some similarities as well as differences between different faiths. The school supports a range of charities and they also sponsor a child in India. Children talked about her letters and how well she is doing in school. This is enriching their understanding of global communities.

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

Collective worship is a very important element of school life and strongly promotes the school's Christian character. Each half term a particular value is the focus and each week there is a word of the week which supports that value. During a week when the overall value was compassion, one child who was new to the school, said he had never before heard the word of the week - empathy, and said he was learning such a lot in his new school. This focus on values, alongside Bible teaching, is giving children a secure understanding of the Christian faith and its expression in people's lives. One child related the story of the Prodigal Son recognising that the father forgave his son even though he had spent his inheritance. The child went on to say that this showed that love was more important than money and it was necessary to show each other forgiveness when there were disagreements at school. Another

child said that when the rector told them stories it helped them to think about what Jesus would have done in different situations. Children speak very positively of the rector's involvement and this partnership with the church is a real asset to the school. Children have some understanding of the Christian view of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and this is incorporated in their opening greeting in collective worship which is led by a child with responses from everyone else. Children also understand the central place that Jesus holds in the Christian faith. During collective worship, they are respectful and enjoy participating in the story-telling, singing and prayers. This was evidenced in a Key Stage 2 act of worship where children were asked to engage in actions at given points in the story and in Key Stage 1 where children sang an action song with real enthusiasm. They have some awareness of Anglican traditions such as the use of symbols, liturgical colours, the liturgical year and key celebrations. However, they do not have enough exposure to other expressions of Christianity so their understanding of other Christian traditions is limited. This is one reason they are not yet outstanding. Planning for collective worship is undertaken by the co-ordinator in consultation with the rector and a cohesive programme based on Christian values and Bible teaching is in place. All teaching staff lead worship. Since the last inspection, a collective worship group has been formed which comprises Key Stage 2 pupils and this has resulted in much more pupil involvement. They now take on responsibility for different types of worship in school and at church, where special services are held termly. As a group, they research and suggest ideas which they then develop together. They then lead their fellow pupils in an act of worship. Children understand that prayer is important to people of faith. They said, 'It is talking to God' and 'It comforts you' and 'If you regret something you can be forgiven'. Prayers are said at points during the day and children have opportunities to write their own prayers. However, this area is not yet outstanding as children are not offered enough creative opportunities to explore the nature of prayer or to pray spontaneously if they so desire. Collective worship is regularly monitored by pupils, the worship group, staff and governors. This process has resulted in some changes to improve the quality of worship such as the introduction of new songs.

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

The leadership and management of the school has gone through significant turbulence. Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. Her strong vision and outstanding commitment, shared by governors and staff, has brought about significant improvement and areas identified for development at the last inspection have moved to areas of strength. Christian values are now firmly embedded at the heart of the school and in evidence across the whole school community. Following her unexpected, long-term absence the school has had two temporary headteachers, the second of which is currently the executive headteacher. She, along with the whole school team, has sought to uphold the Christian ethos and continue to move the school on its trajectory of improvement. They ensure that the vision, so effectively embedded by the substantive headteacher, continues to be the lifeblood of the school. This has resulted in some outstanding practice, particularly around children's understanding of Christian values and their impact on the achievement, behaviour and welfare of the children. The governing body has a SIAMS working party who effectively monitor the school's performance as a church school through regular visits, learning walks, scrutiny of books and discussions with staff and pupils. They seek the views of stakeholders though there is more scope for formally eliciting the views of parents. Their monitoring and evaluating has resulted in the establishment of effective reflection areas in all classrooms and the monitoring of collective worship by the children. The school benefits from an excellent partnership with the church. The rector is regularly in school leading collective worship and offering pastoral support. This partnership helps to embed the children into the local community. The school also benefits from good support from the diocese and from other local schools. Parents are very supportive of the school and really appreciate its strong Christian foundation.