

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Topcliffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	School Lane Topcliffe Thirsk YO7 3RG
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	York
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Outstanding
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Name of multi-academy trust/ federation	n/a
Date/s of inspection	14 October 2016
Date of last inspection	4 November 2011
School's unique reference number	121522
Headteacher	Abigail Clay
Inspector's name and number	Paul Bramley 326

School context

Topcliffe is a smaller than average primary school of 108 pupils. It serves the local village with a number of children attending from the surrounding area. The school is situated in a very pleasant position relatively close to the village church. The pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, with almost all being of White British origin. The proportion known to qualify for pupil premium is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. A significant number of staff have joined the school within the last three years, including the headteacher who has been in post for just over two years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Topcliffe as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors that ensures the Christian values of trust, compassion, friendship and community are at the heart of all school activity.
- As a result, the school has witnessed greatly improved achievement amongst learners across the school.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are underpinned by a strong Christian ethos ensuring that all have a common sense of purpose.
- Links with the local and wider Church community enable the Church and school to be seen as one family.
- Collective worship engages all, providing numerous creative opportunities for children to interact with Christian teachings.

Areas to improve

- Develop areas within the school grounds to allow children time and space for prayer and spiritual reflection outside of those provided within the school.

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

Christian values are at the very centre of the school's work and have underpinned the improvements in achievement and attainment seen in recent times. This is a school that lives and celebrates its Christian values. The headteacher, staff and governors are determined to see their chosen values in action. Children understand the effect of these values on their learning, and speak of the importance of trust, compassion, friendship and community, the school's chosen values. Their moral and social development is therefore excellent. The children visibly enjoy school, with a great sense of happiness, care and joy evident within their behaviour. Behaviour is excellent with any problems being dealt with in a compassionate and consistent way. Children love learning which results in very good attendance. They speak with enormous enthusiasm about the care and attention they receive from adults and peers. Parents speak of their feeling welcomed and of their confidence to approach the school with any concerns or problems. They praise the leadership, staff and governors of the school at every opportunity. They state the difference that the Christian character of the school makes to their children, ensuring that each is cared for, nurtured and celebrated as a child of God. Relationships are outstanding, with an incredibly strong sense of team evident from everyone connected to the school. An ethos of aspiration and seeking continuous improvement is evident in policies, planning and in practice.

Since the last inspection, a review of the school's vision and teaching and learning policy has resulted in staff and governors feeling a greater sense of ownership of school policy and practice. These statements influence the lives of all connected to the school and underpin the family atmosphere created. The links with the church are extremely strong with the present incumbent playing a prominent and inspirational role in the life of the school. Within the curriculum, religious education (RE) is given a very high priority, supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Topics include visits to places of worship, such as a mosque, where pupils can learn from practical activities. Such exciting and educational experiences provide a good insight into a range of cultures different from their own. Living in an almost mono-cultural community, parents, staff and governors welcome the increasing global awareness that gives children a greater knowledge of the wider world community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is extremely important to the life of this school. Staff and children speak of it as the highlight of the day and of its importance in their lives. It is engaging, inspirational and celebrated by all connected to the school. Numerous staff, children and outside groups are involved in its planning and delivery. Children totally engage with worship and behaviour is excellent. Children talk about collective worship with passion and reflect exceptionally well upon the messages that they hear. Planning is very thorough and follows the liturgical calendar. Anglican elements are clearly evident through the use of candles, the Bible, and prayer. Worship links Bible stories to values that are central to the school with staff using every opportunity to reflect upon these values in the day to day life of the school. Children are developing a very good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is symbolised through the lighting of a three-wicked candle at the start of collective worship and by opportunities within RE for discussions around this concept. The monitoring and evaluation process, which includes Foundation Governors, has been refined since the last inspection and is used to inform planning and delivery. It is thorough and has impact. For example, through the redefined vision statement for the school, all feel that they have contributed to the school's development. Visitors from local Baptist and Methodist churches lead collective worship along with the local incumbent. Links with the local church are outstanding with a great deal of commitment and time given to the school by the incumbent and parishioners. Parents and pupils speak positively about the celebration of festivals; Harvest, Christmas and Easter in the church and attendance at such events is extremely high. Parents speak of the impact that such visits have on their children and of how they frequently re-enact collective worship at home, focusing on the themes presented at school. Each class has its own reflective area with a cross and artefact allowing time for personal prayer and reflection. Children enjoy using these areas, stating that they provide space and time for quietness and thought amid the daily bustle of school life. Parents, children and staff have already identified that extending prayer spaces, using areas within the school grounds, is an area they would like to develop.

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

The school articulates extremely well the importance of their chosen Christian values. Trust, compassion, friendship and community are central to the life of the school. The headteacher, staff and governors of the school consistently promote and live out a vision based on Christ's teachings. This vision provides children with a place of learning that is rooted in distinctly Christian values. The school is extremely well led and managed by the headteacher and governors. The leadership are focused on the Christian heart of the school. As a result, there is an outstanding sense of unity and commitment to improvement. This is rooted in very accurate self-evaluation and an explicit Christian vision. Such a vision impacts very positively on pupils in terms of their learning and wellbeing. Strong relationships with the church are evident with the governors playing a major role in supporting the school. Any new staff and governors are made aware of the distinctive nature of this school through induction and CPD. Relationships with the community are excellent with children supporting numerous charity and local church events such as Lent lunches.

Progress since the last SIAS inspection is admirable, with the areas of development from the last inspection being a clear priority for the school. Hence, all previous SIAS areas for development have been met in full. Great emphasis in the last few years has been placed on improving standards and in reviewing the school's Christian vision, particularly since the appointment of a new headteacher. This has achieved a great sense of team and in all staff and governors supporting a highly individualised approach to each child's learning. Every child is seen as an individual, as a child of God. The leadership of RE and collective worship are outstanding with staff constantly seeking ways of involving children in exciting and engaging topics. Provision for SMSC development is also excellent, ensuring that children develop as confident and caring learners.

The governors monitor the distinctive nature of the school exceptionally well through the SIAMS committee. They constructively comment on aspects of school life, such as collective worship and RE. The governors visit regularly, reporting back at every full governing body meeting. The school benefits from a good relationship with the Diocese that includes professional development training and support. Governors are aware of the need for succession planning and ensure that the school is well placed to address the demands of a changing educational landscape. Hence, Topcliffe enjoys working in a collaborative as part of the North Star teaching school alliance.

SIAMS report October 2016 Topcliffe CE VC Primary, School Lane, Topcliffe, YO7 3RG