



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### South Otterington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

South Otterington  
Northallerton  
DL7 9HD

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** York

Local authority: North Yorkshire County Council

Date of inspection: 3 March 2016

Date of last inspection: January 2011

School's unique reference number: 121603

Headteacher: Kate Williamson

Inspector's name and number: Judy Jones 797

#### School context

South Otterington Primary School is smaller than average with 112 children aged 4 to 11 and draws its pupils from the village of South Otterington and surrounding villages and hamlets. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well below average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of South Otterington School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Children of all abilities and backgrounds thrive and reach high standards because they feel safe and respected in a community founded on Christian values.
- Outstanding leadership is constantly looking to improve children's experience and is successful because judgements are based on thorough and accurate evaluation of the school's activities.
- Children think deeply and ask profound questions about all aspects of their lives because they are encouraged to understand the meaning of Christian values and apply them to their relationships with others.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop further the outdoor spiritual garden to include scented plants and sensory materials in order to enhance the area as a place for children to go for quiet reflection.

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

The outstanding nature of the school's distinctive Christian character is rooted in the school's Christian values that include 'respect through truthfulness, thankfulness and friendship.'

Children often speak of the way they feel respected in school and how this enables them to do their best. Consequently standards are generally above average, and children are confident sharing ideas, putting forward proposals, and talking to adults, including visitors. Children relate school values to Christianity by describing the links between their values and the life of Jesus. They know that friendship and service do not belong exclusively to Christianity, but that the story of the Good Samaritan shows how Christianity is underpinned by such values. Relationships based on truthfulness and service are excellent and strengthened by the outstandingly effective Buddy system, in which Year 6 children each look after a Reception child, helping at meal times and in the playground. Year 6 children see this as a privilege, and part of the school value of 'service.' As a result, the school is a purposeful place where attendance is above average and children enjoy stable and rewarding friendships. Behaviour is excellent and exclusions unknown. Religious education (RE) is central to learning and reinforces other parts of the curriculum. Children's spiritual and moral development is supported by such RE topics as the life of St Cuthbert in which children develop their literacy and research skills finding out about how St Cuthbert was an early conservationist, caring for the creatures of the Farne Islands. Teaching about other religions is a strength of the school. The leadership recognises the difficulty of giving children in an all-white British school first-hand knowledge of other communities but has tackled this successfully on several fronts: The whole school spends a year studying one world faith, such as Hinduism. This allows enough time to arrange for a visitor to talk to the children during worship and for the school to make a visit to a temple in Leeds. In addition the school uses a global web site where the children can ask questions, and receive replies from schools all over the world. As a result children can share their knowledge of the global faith being studied and the whole school participates in experiences and enjoys posters and artefacts (such as Divali lamps) made by all the children.

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

Collective worship is central to the school day and reinforces the exceptional nature of the school as a church school. Worship is firmly founded on Christianity and closely linked to the school's values and to the themes of RE being studied. In this way children develop an excellent understanding of both their school values and the Christian teaching on which they are based. Children's knowledge of the Bible is reinforced in worship, both by adults and by Year 6 pupils who take their responsibilities as worship leaders very seriously and whose confident presentations are enjoyed and respected by the rest of the school. Worship helps children's individual spiritual development, for example by enabling them to consider and clarify their understanding of major features of Christianity such as the Trinity. Prayer, both formal prayers such as the Lord's Prayer or Anglican blessings and informal prayers written by the children themselves, is an integral part of worship, and forms a natural part of school life. Reflection is also a feature of all worship sessions, and children are encouraged to think for themselves about such questions as the Trinity. For instance, as a result of discussions about how best to represent God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in collective worship, children have asked that the candle lit at the start of each worship session should consist of one candle with three wicks. Excellent planning of worship enables children to enjoy a varied programme that is coherent and relevant to their lives. This includes weekly visits from speakers such as Methodist and Baptist ministers and representative of other communities. Worship is further enriched by music, and children sing hymns and Christian songs with skill and enjoyment.

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

The outstanding nature of the school as a church school is due to inspirational leadership by the headteacher who has a clear vision of the school as a community based on Christian values. Decisions are founded on well judged strategic planning at all levels. Issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully and imaginatively, to the benefit of the whole school. Evaluation of children's individual academic standards is thorough and this assessment is used effectively to provide extra help where needed. As a result children make good progress

whatever their starting point. Those who might otherwise have difficulty concentrating benefit greatly from the consistently calm atmosphere promoted by the leadership and all adults. Professional development of staff takes good account of the need to ensure the school thrives as a church school in the future, and is well matched to the needs of individual staff. Foundation governors make a significant contribution to the school, ensuring that worship meets statutory requirements and providing insightful evaluation of worship and other aspects of the school's Christian character. Partnership with the diocese is strong and the school makes good use of advice and support. Partnerships with other local churches are also strong, and the school has made friends with a number of more distant communities, including an Egyptian family who subsequently visited the school. The link with the parish church is fundamental to the distinctive Christian nature of the school. The school uses the building for festivals and services so that children are familiar with both the fabric of the church and its use and are at home in these surroundings. The parish priest is well known to the children who see him as one of the school and church family. The outstanding leadership ensures that all who work in the school are included in discussions and decisions and as a result adults and children are committed and enthusiastic. Older children respond to excellent leadership by being deeply committed to upholding the school values and accepting responsibilities for helping younger children, leading worship and being good role models. Leadership is never complacent and is continually innovating and seeking to improve. Consequently adults are inspired to try new initiatives, while never losing sight of the school's fundamental values. For example the school is successfully reaching out to the wider community through specially designed social media. A recent initiative is the development of a reflective space in the school grounds to support children's spiritual development. Already this is having an impact on children's spiritual development and they use the space as a peaceful place to go when they want to think or write and say prayers.

SIAMS report March 2016 South Otterington CE VC School South Otterington DL7 9HD