

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Crowlees Church of England Junior and Infant School	
Springfield Park, Parker Lane, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, WF14 9PD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Leeds
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Kirklees
Date/s of inspection	3 April 2017
Date of last inspection	July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary controlled 107725
Headteacher	Kathy Woods
Inspector's name and number	Nigel Castledine 652

School context

Crowlees is a larger than average junior and infant school located in a semi-urban setting with areas of relative affluence. Most pupils are of White British ethnicity, with few pupils having English as a second language.

The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is low, as is the proportion of those with special educational needs or disability.

Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher and there have been significant changes to the teaching staff team.

The school is closely connected with St Mary's Church, Mirfield and its clergy.

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

- Each pupil is valued and helped to grow academically and spiritually, reflecting the biblical teaching of the God-given infinite worth of every child.
- The vibrant Crowlees Christian values are the foundations of the school's exceptional and sustained strong academic performance and sensitively compassionate pupil nurture.
- Mutually supportive and respectfully inclusive relationships are at the heart of school life, modelled by all the staff and emulated by the pupils.
- Inspirational leadership has ensured the school community has continued to develop and enrich its Christian distinctiveness within an excitingly diverse curriculum that stimulates pupils' spiritual development.

Areas to improve

- Seek to plan additional opportunities for the pupils to take their school worship into St Mary's church so that they and their families can gain wider experiences of Anglican tradition in an appropriate religious setting.
- Extend the pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural global faith by seeking out mutually beneficial learning links with a Christian school in a contrasting country and culture.

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

The vibrant Christian ethos of the school flows from the Crowlees Christian Values that influence every aspect of school life. The initial letters of the values, compassion, respect, outstanding, working together, learning, equality, enjoyment and safety, spell out the name of the school. This helps pupils to remember them, as do the school's Mo and Jo cartoon crow characters that depict the values in action. Collective worship themes, religious education (RE) and weekly faith challenges all ensure that the whole school community knows that the gospel teachings of Jesus are the source of the values. Participation in challenging and thought-provoking discussion supports pupils in being able to express their own opinions and thoughts. As a result of RE teaching linked to Fair Trade, a pupil commented, 'I wish people all around the world were equally as lucky as those who have enough money to buy food and water.'

Gospel values are the foundations that have upheld the school's sustained high academic performance over many years and its Christian, caring support for every pupil. A Year 6 pupil expressed the opinion that, 'The best thing about our school is our Crowlees values.' From a broadly average starting point, progress and attainment are consistently strong across the school and outcomes exceed national averages. The desire for all to succeed is evident in the ways in which the school aims for any gaps in performance, knowledge or skills to be closed by the end of Year 6. Exceptional teaching standards are also influenced by the Christian values, which motivate pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and their resilience in tackling challenges. Pupil attendance figures exceed national expectations and gospel-inspired help and guidance are offered to eliminate instances of persistent absence.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is regarded as the 'golden thread' running through school life, strongly driven by the clear impact of the Crowlees values. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own ideas and beliefs in making choices or decisions and in distinguishing right from wrong. Teachers give time for pupils to consider their own beliefs and those of others so they are able to respond to events and to community needs outside their usual life experiences. Inspired by the Crowlees Christian values, pupils develop appropriate social skills to be able to speak out persuasively when they believe something is wrong, unfair or unjust. Well-planned use of the school's extensive grounds enables a strong emphasis on outdoor learning to develop spirituality. This inspires pupils' awe and wonder in God's created world through the tranquil peace and natural beauty they experience.

Christian teaching supports pupils in demonstrating positive attitudes to diversity and in developing their understanding of the wide ranging cultural influences they experience. This reflects the Christian belief that all are equal in the eyes of God and therefore worthy of respect and care. A child visitor from another school observed, 'I like the way you value other faiths – it's important because Christians respect others and we are all equal.' The life-styles, cultures and faith differences of all pupils are therefore explored and celebrated. Pupils' experiences of Christianity as a world faith are stimulated by learning about its varied global celebration and gospel service to others. This learning is enriched by the school's involvement in the annual Christian Aid week which concentrates on Christianity at work locally, nationally and internationally. However, school-based international links would enrich pupils' understanding of the multi-cultural aspects of global Christianity from a child's perspective.

Almost all pupils' behaviour is exceptionally thoughtful, because all strive to follow the Crowlees gospel values. The school's behaviour policy clearly reflects Christian teaching on respect and compassion, and there is a trained counsellor with whom pupils are able to talk. Bullying is a rare occurrence in school, with any instances dealt with swiftly and compassionately. All members of the school community seek to follow gospel teaching in challenging stereotypes and any use of derogatory language. Pupils are keen to make a positive contribution to school life by being of Christian service to each other and in developing leadership skills. Pupils like to show their Christian stewardship by their compassionate support for local, national and global charities because they understand that helping others is a core gospel teaching.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship at Crowlees is a key part of each school day as it brings everyone together as a Christian family. It provides rich opportunities for those of faith to experience a sense of the Divine, and for all present to develop spiritually and morally. It assists personal exploration of belief, and provides opportunities for pupils to ponder the big questions of life and existence. It enables the Crowlees Christian values to be contemplated within prayer and it provides a meaningful context for self-reflection. Worship connects with learning through the weekly reflective faith questions set by the headteacher. These prompt pupils to consider the impact of the themes of worship on their own lives and to link their worship to their RE learning. Worship is varied in its style and format, following a weekly thematic approach. Its plans follow the Anglican liturgical calendar and include appropriate suggestions from the parish clergy. The biblical themes interconnect with the RE curriculum and give due regard to other world faiths.

The school uses a worship table as a focal point, covered with a cloth of the appropriate liturgical colour to emphasise the changing church seasons. Christian tradition is seen in the placing of a cross and three candles on the

worship table. The lighting of the candles at times of prayer is used to emphasise the Trinitarian doctrine of the three aspects of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Liturgical responses are used during the candle lighting to emphasise each aspect. This ritual helps pupils to remember the significance of the Holy Trinity for Christians.

Enthusiastic singing of worship songs is an inspirational part of worship. Prayer and reflection times are enriched by use of the traditional Lord's Prayer as well as quiet reflection and the inclusion of pupils' own prayers. One child contributed her Christian beliefs through her prayer, 'My prayer is for people to have freedom all around the world'.

Pupils gain wider experiences of Anglican tradition from the school worship that takes place in St Mary's church on days of special significance such as Education Sunday, and some Christian festivals. However, these opportunities are currently limited in scope and number. Pupils participate in these services, producing prayers and preparing readings. Parents and families are welcomed to these acts of worship and so can share in the liturgy with their children. The church is also used as an RE learning resource to enrich pupils' understanding of places of worship.

A senior member of staff co-ordinates collective worship. She is supported by the headteacher and the clergy as well as by the multi-faith pupils' collective worship council. This enthusiastic group meets weekly to consider worship and to evaluate its impact on school life. The feedback from their discussions forms the basis of a regular report to governors and senior staff on worship's impact within school life. A pupil stated, 'I like learning the stories from the Bible. Hugh (a clergy team member) makes them come to life and he explains them in a way we understand.' Such feedback ensures senior leaders have evidence of pupil voice as part of their worship overview and can use this to inform its development. Adult leaders of worship include all teachers and the local clergy team, who have a significant pastoral role in school life. Occasional visits to conduct school worship by leaders from other local churches provide pupils with a wider ecumenical perspective.

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

Since the last inspection, the change of headteacher has refreshed the leadership of the school and renewed its Christian distinctiveness. Aply led by the committed headteacher, all senior leaders, including the governing board, ensure that the Crowlees gospel values remain at the heart of every aspect of school life. This strong Christian focus is considered to be central to the successful development of the school. This is because it engenders a highly effective working atmosphere in which there is support and encouragement for all to excel. This is carefully monitored by all senior leaders and refined by systematic self-evaluation and planning of further improvement. Significantly, aspects of Christian distinctiveness are always included within the annual development plan to ensure Crowlees retains its inclusive and welcoming gospel values in every aspect of school life.

The governors are closely involved in school life so they can ensure the vitality of the Crowlees faith vision and values. These are monitored through focused visits, and through systematic scrutiny of the impact of Christian distinctiveness in maintaining the highest standards of education and pupil nurture within a positive, happy school.

The school is a strategic partner within the Yorkshire Anglican Teaching Schools Alliance, which provides staff with additional professional development opportunities. As a result, teachers have become specialist leaders of education and have benefited from the Christian school leadership courses run by the alliance. Links with other local Church of England schools include regular meetings focused on developing Christian distinctiveness. Staff recruitment has a distinct Christian focus which ensures that all new members of staff can fully support the school's Christian ethos and worship.

There are mutually supportive links though shared events and worship with St Mary's church in Mirfield, its congregation and its clergy team. Two members of this team are school governors, one serving as chair of the governing board. The weekly Christian after-school JAM (Jesus and me) club is jointly offered to all pupils by church and school volunteers. Links with local Christian churches of other denominations are ongoing and beneficial to pupils' local experiences of Christianity. Christian values are evident in the school's support for community events, charitable fundraising and the elderly. School links with parents and carers are welcoming and open to all, reflecting the gospel values of respect and working together. Consequently, parental engagement is strong with an active parents' and friends' association that organises special events that bring the community together. In order to sustain the school's emphasis on pupil's progress and nurture, communication between home and school is mutually supportive. Regular information sessions take place and there is easy access to educational advice and guidance, which assists parents in supporting their child's learning at home. Parents clearly appreciate how their children are nurtured by the inclusive faith ethos of the school, one mother commenting, 'My children are growing into well-rounded individuals who, through school, are caring and compassionate through their understanding of their Christian beliefs and their learning about other faiths.'