



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Melsonby Methodist Primary School

West Road
Melsonby
Richmond
DL10 5ND

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Circuit: North Yorkshire Dales

District: Darlington

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Date of inspection: 28 April 2016

Date of last inspection: July 2011

School's unique reference number: 121543

Headteacher: Trevor Watson

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field 151

School context

The school is a much smaller than average primary school serving the village of Melsonby and families from further afield. In the last year numbers have dropped and pupils are now taught in two mixed age classes. Nearly all pupils are White British and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils or those with statements of educational or health needs is below average. The school is part of the Swaledale Partnership Alliance. The Methodist minister from Richmond supports the school and the headteacher has been in post for 3 years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Melsonby Primary as a Methodist school are good

- Christian values are lived out through the strong family ethos. This has a powerful impact on relationships and the wellbeing of children and adults.
- Pupils are exceptionally mature and reflective. They fully understand Christian values and show a high level of respect and compassion for others.
- The headteacher and senior leader provide clear direction in ensuring the school is fully inclusive and embraces the needs of all pupils in line with its Christian character.
- Foundation governors make a significant contribution to maintaining the school's Christian distinctiveness at the heart of its development.

Areas to improve

- Establish regular systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's Christian and Methodist distinctiveness in order to ensure this remains secure in the future.
- Enable pupils to make use of their biblical knowledge and spiritual awareness by offering them specific responsibilities for planning, leading and evaluating collective worship.
- Arrange links with communities elsewhere in the UK or worldwide to give pupils first hand experience of different faiths and cultures.

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

The overwhelming characteristic of this small school is that of a family and this has a profound impact on pupils' achievement, personal development and wellbeing. The mixed age classes work extremely well. Younger children benefit from having the older pupils as role models and learn to appreciate the talents and needs of adults and children alike. Each person is 'known, noticed and valued' so relationships are exemplary and any tensions are quickly resolved. Christian values set clear guidelines for behaviour, relationships and attitudes to others. All pupils are very familiar with these values and highlight love, resilience and respect as the ones most important to them. They have no difficulty in drawing on their extensive knowledge of Bible stories to explain the meaning of the values and how each one works in daily life. Religious education lessons (RE) help develop the school's Christian character. Pupils reflect in depth on big spiritual questions and show empathy for others. They describe this as 'seeing the world through someone else's eyes' and link it to 'Jesus loving everyone whatever they have or haven't done' and this is the basis of their acceptance of the differences between individuals. The school is therefore highly inclusive. This is true of all areas of school life, from the way pupils are enabled to engage in worship to the selection of sports teams. All pupils are given the best possible chances to do well. The school is highly regarded for its success in working with pupils who have special needs. New pupils and their families receive a warm welcome and the staff's attention to detail enables pupils to make a smooth transition into the school. Changes to the curriculum have been prompted by national requirements as well as class reorganisation. Pupils have proved very resilient in adapting to changes and the close attention to the needs of individual children continues to be a strength of the school's practice. Tracking of pupils' progress indicates that the school's good outcomes are being sustained. Pupils are doing at least as well as expected and the majority do even better. The gaps are rapidly closing for pupils who need special help.

Pupils understand that their small village school does not have the same diversity as schools in other places. Although they enjoy covering different religions in RE, it is how beliefs affect the pattern of daily life that captures their interest. Older pupils remember the day a group of Muslim visitors came to the school and it is this first hand contact that is missing from the current curriculum. Pupils' knowledge of different Christian traditions is growing, although this does not extend to Christianity as a global faith. They speak confidently about their visit to the Methodist church in Richmond because this highlighted for them the distinctive features of Methodist and Anglican churches.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship plays an important part in every school day because it reinforces the sense of belonging to a family and the importance of the school's Christian foundation. It is a time that involves everyone even those whose particular needs pose difficulties. The staff find practical ways to overcome such difficulties and other children are fully supportive. Changes made following the last inspection have brought greater consistency to the pattern of worship. Pupils now have a better understanding of the key features of Christian worship through the use of a worship table with Christian symbols, colours of the church year and a place to add reflections and key messages from previous assemblies. Pupils are proud that they can remember the words of numerous Christian songs and traditional Christian prayers without the need for any prompts. Their new school prayer, written by pupils with the help of foundation governors, is very popular. It has reignited their interest in prayer and reflection. They see their value both for themselves and as something to share together. Pupils' grasp of spiritual ideas and their confidence to express them clearly is something they readily apply to all areas of the curriculum. Their spiritual, moral and social development is therefore particularly strong. Although the style of worship regularly reflects Methodist traditions, there are gaps in what pupils know of John Wesley and the Methodist Church. This is partly outweighed by pupils' excellent knowledge of Bible stories from acting these out in worship. The regular celebration of Christian festivals

means they have a secure knowledge of the place Jesus Christ plays in the Christian faith. They are familiar with the wording of 'God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit' as part of prayers and blessings but less sure of why it is used.

Worship is planned by the senior teacher and all staff play a part in delivering the themes.

Christian values have a high profile and this reinforces their role in school life. Pupils are keen and confident to take an active role but their knowledge and skills are underused in leading and evaluating the impact of worship. There is no longer a Methodist chapel in the village but services for Christmas and Easter take place in the Anglican church and this strengthens the school's role in the community. The Methodist minister's presence at these occasions is greatly valued and the stories he tells are remembered long afterwards.

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

School leaders and governors are committed to the school's Christian and Methodist foundation. This is firmly established in their long-term vision for the school continuing to serve the local community. The partnership with parents has quickly been restored following a dip in confidence around recent changes. Parents value the Christian principles with which the school is led whether or not they themselves have a faith background. Its welcoming, inclusive atmosphere, where promises are kept, is seen as the result of its Christian values.

The headteacher and governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and the areas where improvement is needed. The priorities for action are appropriate but few are integrated into whole school development planning and this has slowed progress. The cycle of self-review that informs strategic planning as a church school has been dependent on senior staff. They acknowledge that, although feedback has been gathered through surveys and parent forums, this has not included specific questions on worship and RE. This is now changing as the current foundation governors take a far more active and discerning role in supporting the development of the school's distinctively Christian and Methodist character. Their monitoring visits that include talking with staff and pupils are prompting actions to secure improvement.

Collective worship retains its high profile in school life and the senior leader benefits from training through the Swaledale Alliance. However, the combination of national curriculum changes and reorganisation within the school has meant that planning for collective worship and RE is happening on a term by term basis. This means that, although teaching about Christianity remains strong, there is no coherent picture of where pupils learn about Methodism. The Methodist minister from Richmond is a regular and much valued presence in special services throughout the year in spite of the limited time available to him. Whilst wider links with the Methodist Church have proved difficult to establish in recent years, his pastoral support has played a vital role in maintaining a sense of being a Methodist school.

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