

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

West Felton Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

School Road, West Felton, Oswestry, SY11 4JR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Lichfield
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Shropshire
Date of inspection	18 May 2017
Date of last inspection	15 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123512
Headteacher	Nicola Bond
Inspector's name and number	Allyson Taylor 768

School context

West Felton Church of England Primary School is a small school serving a village in rural Shropshire. There are 128 pupils on roll and 28 youngsters who are of nursery age. The number on roll has risen and the school is oversubscribed. In January 2015, West Felton joined with St. Andrew's Primary School, Nesscliffe to establish the Westcliffe Federation. An executive headteacher and one governing body lead both schools. The number of children with additional personal or learning needs is below the national figure; however the school attracts families whose children require extra support. Almost all pupils are of white British background.

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

- A palpable sense of joy emanates throughout the school and this demonstrates how each child and adult is valued as precious to God and to each other.
- There is exceptional pastoral care for all ages and abilities and so all are flourishing within the spirit of love, so strongly modelled by the gifted headteacher, governors and staff.
- West Felton is a school in discipleship, living out its Christian values of love, forgiveness and respect to create a genuine wish to follow Jesus and to grow together in faith.
- Forward thinking and committed leaders work towards sharing expertise with other schools as the federation grows and this improves the sustainability of West Felton and its partners.
- Links with the local churches and community are so close that it is said 'the village benefits from the children in this school.'

Areas to improve

- Establish a new Christian-based vision statement for West Felton as part of the expanding federation, so that all the schools have a shared vision for their work as distinctive church schools.
- Extend monitoring by governors to include engagement with pupils during the school day, so learners' views inform the development of the school as a church school.
- Widen opportunities for different ages of pupils to plan and lead acts of worship in order to make worship even more relevant to children's age and stage of spiritual development.

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

In honouring each other, all members of the school community also honour God, Jesus and the Christian faith as a natural way of life. West Felton shines as a beacon of inclusivity and equality where those who may struggle find support and spiritual nourishment. The Christian character can be felt as soon as a visitor enters the school.

Welcome is both genuine and warm; hospitality abounds. It is not surprising, therefore, that some parents see the school as a haven for them as well as for their children. Children talk with ease about the chosen Christian values, such as, forgiveness and courage, and link them to several examples from the Bible. The values make a significant difference to children's lives. One pupil said: 'the values help us aspire to be better.'

The Christian character of the school has an exceptional impact on academic achievement as well as personal development and wellbeing. With outstanding teaching and pastoral support, pupils are confident to overcome challenges and to know that they are cherished. An older pupil described how, when facing SATs tests, she could 'let worries loose as God's hands are holding us.' As a direct result of the church school ethos, standards remain high and appropriate steps taken to rectify any fluctuations in results across year groups. Very high attendance figures confirm that pupils enjoy school and thrive in a curriculum which is varied and created to meet all needs. Around the classes, enthusiasm yet calmness pervade activities and motivation to learn is high. This is due to the wholehearted commitment of staff to do their best for the children in their care, all going that extra mile tirelessly and sustained by their shared Christian values. When pupils have difficulties, specialist support is provided and the school is fortunate in the range of expertise that staff can offer. This has developed due to the federation, with key staff working across West Felton and Nesscliffe.

Behaviour is of the highest standard, while allowing children to be individuals with different interests and strengths. Relationships between older and younger pupils are notably strong. The 'family feel' has been maintained as the number on roll has increased. Christian principles influence decisions made to admit those who need the special care which West Felton offers. As a result, the local authority recommends the school to prospective parents as a centre of excellence for different needs.

Religious education (RE) has a high profile in the curriculum; lessons are challenging and engaging. Skills in questioning and reflection are developed, for example, through an impressive study of the conflicting views of Darwinism and the Bible. This demonstrates that the subject contributes to the all-embracing Christian character of the school as well as enhancing learning in other curriculum areas. RE also enhances spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The study of different faiths and customs around the world gives pupils a growing sense of their place in our multi-cultural global village. The school is currently working on a definition of what is meant by 'spirituality' so that this aspect of learning might be more explicitly planned across the curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

While many in the school use the term 'assembly' there is a clear understanding that the school 'collects for worship'. Daily acts of worship, in classes, Key Stages and whole school groupings, unite the school as a harmonious community. Worship explores the chosen values from the 'Values for Life' resource. This means that pupils have an extensive knowledge and understanding of Bible stories which exemplify the value for each half-term. Children know that stories like David and Goliath, Daniel and the Good Samaritan help them to learn about courage and apply that learning in their own lives. A pupil said, 'I helped my friend have courage on the climbing wall.'

Worship, therefore, is securely based on biblical teaching. Jesus is given prominence and His life and teaching are central to worship. The school celebrates the main Christian festivals and this has developed since the last inspection. Pupils appreciate the Communion and Ash Wednesday services in St. Michael's which enhance their worship experience. They feel at home in church and enjoy leading the singing or sharing prayers and Bible readings. As worship in church has grown, the number of parents and members of the community who attend school services has risen. This shows how school and church support each other. The school benefits from connections and regular visits from clergy from the Methodist chapel and local Pradoc church, as well as the clergy from St. Michael's. This enriches worship. As a result, pupils have a good understanding that there are different denominations within Christianity. They are, however, less confident when talking about Christians in other parts of the world.

Pupils are familiar with a range of Anglican traditions, including a simple greeting and response and regularly pray using the Lord's Prayer. They are also aware of the the concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and refer to this in the symbolic lighting of three wicks in one candle.

Pupils offer feedback on worship. This was a development point from the previous inspection which has been met. Their views on worship are not yet, however, explored in a systematic way with governors or informing school development plans.

Prayer punctuates the school day. Quiet spaces in each class showcase prayers and focus objects for worship. All classes say grace at lunch; most classes use prayers written by children at the end of the day. Pupils are comfortable with prayer, saying they like the time of quiet and space to think. They particularly like it when they are given the opportunity to lead aspects of worship and to read prayers they have written. At present, Year 6 pupils do this and there is scope for West Felton's articulate and spiritual youngsters of all ages to take a more regular and active role in planning and leading acts of worship. Worship plays a vital part in the nurture experienced in school. Children comment that worship and prayer 'helps us to feel we belong.' A memorable worship was the celebration to mark the Queen's birthday with children from Nesscliffe. As the federation grows, leaders hope that there will be more opportunities to come together for worship. Collective worship has a profound impact on adults as well as pupils. Time to be together, to reflect and revisit familiar Bible stories, is described by staff as 'enriching'.

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

West Felton is undoubtedly blessed in the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, her deputy and governors. Leaders at all levels are motivated by deeply felt Christian values, living out their care and compassion as naturally as breathing. A review of the mission statement and values is planned after the federation has welcomed its two new partner schools. This sensitive and supportive leadership style reflects the inclusive heart of the school. The initial thoughts on the mission statement are based on the Church of England's 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good' vision. This shows leaders' engagement with national policy. The chair of governors commented that the 'Deeply Christian' vision provides affirmation and echoes all that they stand for as a church school. In talking about wisdom, hope, dignity and community, he said 'this is what we are, this is what we do.' This is seen in leaders' decisions to deploy key staff where pupils' needs are identified. It also shows their commitment to nurturing future leaders of church schools.

The website and policies are beginning to mirror the federation principles. Leaders are aware that once the mission statement and values are refreshed, these will shape policy reviews over time and be more explicitly referenced on all school documentation. Leaders at all levels are to be commended for implementing suggestions, made during the inspection of Nesscliffe in 2016, at West Felton. For example, noting the current value with a Bible text on newsletters so families may explore the value at home as well as at school.

Leaders know the school very well. Self-evaluation is strong with the inspection self-evaluation document reflecting the views of staff and governors. Statutory requirements as a church school are fully met. Action plans refer to developing governors' role in evaluating the Christian character. Consideration of church school elements has improved considerably since the last inspection. The foundation committee meets regularly to monitor actions and progress as a church school. These are not stated as clearly in the school development plan as they might. With a full complement of foundation governors and the future leadership structure agreed, West Felton is well-placed to build on its existing systems to monitor and evaluate Christian distinctiveness, RE and worship. However, listening to pupil voice and taking forward the views expressed is not part of the current cycle of monitoring.

Leaders ensure the coordinators for RE and worship are supported. Members of staff who teach RE have attended 'Understanding Christianity' training and this is already improving pupils' knowledge of key concepts like the incarnation. The diocese holds the school in high regard and high quality professional development is accessed through the diocesan advisor.

Partnerships with parents are particularly strong. Parents appreciate how approachable all staff are, and say that the school offers the hand of Christian fellowship and friendship to them as well as to their children. Community links are described as a 'win-win situation.' Pupils play an active role in village life. They take part in fundraising events and the village carnival. Many current and former pupils contributed to the decision to upgrade equipment at the local play area. Visiting the care home also shows pupils taking action in the service of others.

The positive working relationship across the federation is set to grow further. By taking action to secure the sustainability of West Felton, in partnership with other church schools, governors and senior leaders show that this is a Christian community in action. They are paving the way for long-term 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10, Church of England Vision Statement, 2016) as all church schools are encouraged to do.