

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Micklefield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Great North Road
Micklefield
Leeds
LS25 4RQ

Diocese: York

Local authority: Leeds
Dates of inspection: 26 February 2008
Date of last inspection: 24-26 June 2003
School's unique reference number: 107992
Headteacher: Mr John North (Acting Executive Head)
Inspector's name and number: Allan Summers 281

School context

Situated on the edge of a former mining village, Micklefield Primary School occupies a rural setting overlooking rolling agricultural land. With 99 pupils of overwhelmingly white British heritage the school serves a very mixed catchment taking children from all sections of the socio-economic spectrum. Twenty years old, this attractive school is sturdily built in stone and set within well-tended grounds and gardens which, alongside a sizeable playing field provides a valuable learning resource.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Micklefield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Micklefield Primary School is a happy learning community whose ethos of love, care and the well being of all is firmly rooted in Christian values and principles and strongly supports the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. This has created a calm, orderly but purposeful school with a genuine and warm family feel. Children feel safe and valued, want to do their best, and are developing a wholesome work ethic. Said one child, "We know we're not perfect and neither is this school but we're working hard to improve ourselves and everything".

Established strengths

- A caring Christian ethos which underpins all aspects of school life and strongly supports the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes.
- Responsive, happy, considerate and confident children who take responsibility willingly.
- High quality and varied acts of collective worship which are inclusive and engage all who share in them.

Focus for development

- To fully embed the current, well considered collective worship policy and to extend its scope to include a structured evaluation process.
- The governing body to become fully apprised of its responsibilities in terms of challenge and support and to identify individuals who will liaise on collective worship and denominational issues.

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

At Micklefield Primary School with its lovely celebratory displays in a bright, welcoming entrance lobby, tastefully incorporating Christian artefacts, visitors obtain an immediate and clear visual affirmation of the distinctive Christian character of this learning community. The faces of all the children forming a giant cross is particularly striking and symbolic as is the monumental multi-cultural display which grew out of a school focus week. Children talk with pride about their involvement in these projects and are able to articulate the special nature of their school. As a small church school, "we feel more together, like more of a team", "we all know one another and get along", "there's a good atmosphere, we share and learn to respect

one another, because Jesus said love one another”, were just a few of their responses. Addressing the ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes is a high priority at Micklefield. Staff know the children well and understand their special needs in this very mixed community and are developing a comprehensive tracking and monitoring system to maximise their progress. The strong Christian ethos which underpins all aspects of school life has created a learning environment with appropriate behaviour and reward systems in which children are thriving. A very effective and articulate school council ensures that the voice of learners has a prominent place in the life and development of their school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and as such forms a key element in the school’s Christian witness. There has been diligent work by the management team to establish a clear, comprehensive, imaginative policy with well-considered themes and strategies for planning, organisation and involvement. Opportunities are sought to pick up aspects of these themes across the curriculum especially in Religious Education and PSHCE thus enhancing RE in its widest sense. Delivery of worship is enriched by the variety of personnel leading it including the vicar of Micklefield. Informal feedback has been helpful and positive but is as yet unstructured and has come mainly from the adults in the school community. Consideration should now be given to a monitoring and review process which should include views of learners. There are close and strong links with the Church which is effectively used fortnightly for whole school worship and for special occasions such as Christmas and Easter enabling many more parents to share the worship. Children happily take responsibility for arranging the worship artefacts and seating. They enter and exit in respectful silence with music helping to set a prayerful ambience for the occasion. Participation and their singing, for such a small school is wonderful to behold. A musical setting of prayer responses was particularly uplifting. Children enjoy their involvement and compose prayers for the occasion and other times such as grace at lunchtime when children are invited to lead the prayer. Many children can remember and talk in animated fashion about worship especially the “funny bits”. Most children remain engaged and there is a sense of reverence and spiritual growth flowing from their experiences.

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

There is a strong sense of tradition at Micklefield exemplified by the commemorative plaque in the entrance which recalls the pit disaster of 1896 and its effect on the children and church school status. The strong, productive links with the church are as crucial an element in the life of the school now as they were back in those dark days. Led by a fine professional the new management team are working hard to maintain and enhance the school’s standing and have established ambitious plans to regain the school’s prominence at the heart of the local community. There is a successful collegiality in the management style with everyone, having reaffirmed the mission statement, sharing a vision for continued improvement. Indeed there has been kindled such a flame of enthusiasm for success that it is having a strongly positive impact on the life of the school and the morale of staff who will continue to benefit from the support mechanisms established. From early years the application of some well-considered policies is now enhancing the learning opportunities of an intake cohort whose baseline ability is low and whose social and communication skills are underdeveloped. Children too are being brought into the management process through a very articulate school council and discussions are already underway to translate the current vision statement into attainable child friendly objectives. Structures and systems are robustly in place which will underpin developments. Acknowledgement must be given to the sterling work done in recent times to set in place a plan to improve governance and help governors to carry out their responsibilities for support and challenge effectively. However whilst there is a real will and capacity to succeed governors still have quite a journey to make and should look particularly at how best to monitor denominational issues, such as the impact of collective worship on learners and to foster the distinctive Christian nature of the school.