

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Selby Abbey Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

New Lane
Selby
North Yorkshire
YO8 4QB

Diocese: York

Local authority: North Yorkshire
Dates of inspection: 20 October 2009
Date of last inspection: 14 July 2008
School's unique reference number: 121586
Headteacher: Mrs Jo Jennings
Inspector's name and number: Allan Summers 281

School context

With 296 children on role and serving a very mixed catchment which includes significant numbers of children from socially disadvantaged and challenging circumstances, Selby Abbey CE Primary School occupies a surprisingly peaceful but tight location, in the shadow of the Abbey, close to the centre of Selby. Play space is at a premium but typically cooperative and good relationships with a leisure provider allows for the use of the adjacent playing fields.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Selby Abbey Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

This school is above all a happy learning community where smiles abound amongst both staff and pupils. Despite the difficulties inherent in this old building an environment has been created which exudes an atmosphere of love, care and the well being of all firmly rooted in Christian values and principles. Tremendous progress has been made and real success achieved in addressing the development points from the previous inspection. Learners say they feel safe and valued, want to do their best, and are developing a wholesome work ethic. Said one parent, 'Teamwork here is quite outstanding, a brilliant school, nothing too hard for them to do'.

Established strengths

- The inclusive nature of the school and its exemplary programmes for integration and pupil support.
- Responsive, happy, considerate and confident children who take responsibility willingly.
- The ethos of care, love and individual well being which allows all learners to thrive, based firmly on Christian values and principles.
- Leadership from an outstandingly committed headteacher and the collegiality of all sections of the learning community in sharing a common purpose.

Focus for development

- Publish a more robust declaration of the importance of collective worship in the life and distinctiveness of the school.
- Press ahead with plans for professional development with staff in terms of confidence in monitoring the distinctive Christian character of the school.

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

Any question marks regarding the Christian character and quality of the learning environment of Selby Abbey CE Primary School are immediately dispelled on entering a building in which every inch of space is exploited to celebrate the achievements and life of this joyful, hard working, warm and friendly school. The quality, vibrancy, colour and enormous range of display not only supports the secular curriculum but affirms how proud the learning community is of its Christian foundation and heritage. 'Selby Abbey, church and school, hand in hand', sums up a fundamental truth and one which parents and children proudly support. 'Having these things on the walls makes us feel special', and 'It's really good, they celebrate

our work and we have fun learning', were just two examples of children's comments. Because the whole learning community recently engaged in a wholesale review of the aims and mission of the school, children feel an ownership of these vision statements, empowered, talk of their respect for one another, their school and the wider environment. Christian values such as forgiveness and reconciliation have strongly influenced a revised behaviour code, carefully considered during its inception by the active school council, 'To infinity and beyond through our core values'. Consequently children are scrupulously fair, sharing but cherishing the very many opportunities for responsibility such as playground 'leader', school council representation and charitable works especially the undemonstrative welfare support for the needy in their own community which is helping to cement good relations. Children's behaviour is good as is their work ethic within a curriculum increasingly matched to individual needs. Learners display an understanding of the special nature of their school and appreciate the support and encouragement they get, in particular the local Polish community see this school as a model of good practice in terms of integration and support.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship is well conducted in a fashion wholly appropriate to the ages and stages of development of the children and forms an important and central part in the school's daily life. A more robust and extended statement however in the prospectus would convey more clearly the centrality of worship in the life of the school. Participation is an uplifting experience and children respond readily and with enthusiasm. A respectful ambience is created, with music and technology skilfully harnessed to enhance the occasion. Where appropriate, 'Talking partner' sessions work very well and give children an opportunity to reflect on the content or message. Diligent work by the coordinator has established a clear, comprehensive, imaginative policy with well-considered themes many of which come directly from a recent community wide consultation examining key Christian values. Opportunities are sought to pick up aspects of these themes across the curriculum especially in religious education (RE) and personal, social, health and careers education (PSHCE) thus enhancing RE in its widest sense which is managed effectively, and well supported by clergy and visitors. Learners play a key role at all stages of collective worship, planning, organisation, delivery and evaluation, 'Not just passive spectators but enthusiastic contributors', as a monitoring document suggests. Many talk animatedly about their enjoyment and worship's positive effects on themselves and the life of the school. 'There's lots of talk about God and Jesus, feeling special and valued and loving your neighbour', said one boy, 'but our school's like an international community, we all get on, respect life'. Well maintained with tasteful display, quiet prayer/holy corners provide personal space for reflection in all classrooms and a focus for the development of a spiritual dimension in the busyness of the school day.

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

This school has a clear and honest view of self-evaluation and has identified its strengths and weaknesses with accuracy. An incredible amount of hard work has taken place over recent times spearheaded by an outstandingly committed and determined headteacher. She is ably supported by a management team and governing body who share a vision to see sustained improvement successfully in place. This has been very well achieved. Church and school are one and mutually beneficial in the school's striving to be at the heart of the local community. Because of the honesty and openness of school management parents are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of school, 'The level of care from everybody has been just amazing', 'Every child is fully included in all activities, so well supported, excellent teamwork', and, 'Our children will miss this school and so will we but they're really well prepared for the next step', being just a flavour of the many plaudits. Governance is robust and rigorous, the tough questions are asked, strategies and systems are strongly in place and productive partnerships have been forged to monitor, evaluate and challenge the school in all its aspects. At the heart of all developments and day to day interactions there is a clear resolve to promote the denominational integrity of Selby Abbey Primary School as a profoundly Christian based learning community and to engage in a continuous dialogue to monitor its effectiveness. However governors should now press ahead with professional development plans for staff in terms of identifying and monitoring those elements which contribute most effectively to the distinctive Christian character of the school.

SIAS report October 2009 Selby Abbey CE (VC) Primary School, Selby, YO8 4QB.