

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Thornton Watlass Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Thornton Watlass
Ripon
HG4 4AH

Diocese: Ripon & Leeds

Local authority: North Yorkshire
Dates of inspection: 6th January 2011
Date of last inspection: 9th March 2007
School's unique reference number: 121521
Acting Headteacher: Mrs Helen Dudman
Inspector's name and number: Judith Leeming 677

School context

Thornton Watlass is a very small rural village school situated near Bedale in the Yorkshire Dales attracting approximately 40% of its children from out of catchment. The school serves a mixed socio-economic area with all learners being white British. 6% of children are eligible for free school meals and the number of children with special educational needs is about the national average. The 34 children are taught in two mixed age group classes.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thornton Watlass as a Church of England school is outstanding.

The care, love, attitudes and relationships shown throughout the school are a distinctive feature. The caring Christian community serves its families well preparing the children to live as active, mature, considerate, confident and responsible citizens. For the past term the school has been led by an acting head and the school has formed a federation with another school so there has been a considerable amount of change but the school and its stakeholders have been supported by distinctive Christian values. Since the last inspection the school has maintained most of its strengths and has made excellent progress against the identified areas for development.

Established strengths

- The Christian ethos that inspires and informs most aspects of life and work in the school.
- The independent, mature and confident children who are supported through excellent relationships within the school
- The warm loving family style environment that nurtures respect and care.
- The strong emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development clearly based on Christian values.

Focus for development

- Review the vision and mission statement in the light of the new federation, involving all groups from the school community
- Provide opportunities for children to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship on a regular basis
- Safeguard the distinctive Christian character of the school in the light of the new federation

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

The Christian ethos is central to the life of the school and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly based on Christian values, especially love, understanding, tolerance and respect, which impact significantly on the behaviour of the children. The school's mission statement is clearly displayed and is shared with parents through the school brochure. The children experience a vast amount of 'awe and wonder' through their regular outdoor lessons and activities. Prayer and worship play an important part in the daily life in school and impacts significantly on the children's behaviour and attitudes. The children are familiar with some traditional Anglican practices and there are plans to further enhance this with an increased number of regular visits to the local church and combined school/church services. The parents say they are proud of the school and enjoy the open door policy. They comment

that the staff are always prepared to spend time with them and are happy to listen, dealing with any issues immediately and thoroughly. Parents say they choose to send their children to the school because of its distinctive Christian nature. The school is totally inclusive and progress overall is good and in some cases outstanding. Relationships at all levels are excellent with staff providing excellent role models for the children which encourages the children to be polite, well-mannered and show outstanding consideration to others. There is a strong buddy system in place and the older children willingly looking after the younger ones. They speak fondly of their 'Worry Box' where concerns are gathered and dealt with, their reward system and BOB (Be Our Best). The school environment contributes to the spiritual development of the pupils, for example areas for quiet reflection in the school grounds and vivid interesting, thought provoking displays in the classrooms and Christian symbols and themes throughout the school. The children develop a good understanding of the local and global community through their links with other local schools, use of the internet to access news issues from this country and around the world which are then related to Christian values, cultural awareness weeks and a newly developed overseas link with a school in Sierra Leone which supports their tolerance and understanding of other faiths and cultures. This is further enhanced by visits to places of worship of other faiths and visitors to school. Many children display a mature confidence and an enjoyment of taking responsibility, evidenced by their enthusiasm to apply for posts of responsibility within the school, which encourages them to learn to be good citizens alongside their charitable fundraising and enterprise initiatives which are always related to Christian values.

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

Well planned and led Worship inspires the school community. The children know that worship time is special and their behaviour is good throughout the session. They speak enthusiastically of their worship and the positive affect the reflection time has on them. One child described how it made him feel peaceful and calm. The older children take responsibility for setting up the worship and all children are active in selecting the hymns. There is a rigorous formal method of monitoring and evaluation of the worship by adults and this would be further enhanced by extending this to the children. The children also have expressed a wish to be more involved in planning and leading the worship although they already regularly prepare their own prayers. The children are aware of the symbolism within the church and they are familiar with examples of Anglican tradition and practice. The children regularly attend the local church for special services; there are plans to increase this regularity and to include joint school/church services quarterly on a Sunday. During the inspection Epiphany was celebrated through the worship including one child explaining the traditions she experienced in Majorca where she had lived for most of her life. Children of all faiths and none attend the worship and all staff take turns to lead the worship. There are regular prayer times through the school day and the children know some traditional prayers. The rector from the local church leads the Collective Worship on a fortnightly basis.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good with some outstanding features.

The school is in the process of forming a new governing body as it has formally joined in federation with a local small community school. However the two very active Foundation Governors will remain in post. The acting head has continued to uphold the school's vision and mission and has actively progressed and developed further links with the local church. Stakeholders readily articulate how the school's Christian values enrich attitudes and behaviours throughout the school community. The school's Foundation governors willingly undertake professional development to enhance their role and are active in monitoring aspects of the school. The school uses the church whenever possible, has a school noticeboard within the church and regularly contributes articles to the parish magazine. Parents and children speak positively of how their views are sought and how they are involved in the school. The past leadership and present governors of the school are active in their development of staff from within the school to meet the needs of succession planning and the future leadership of Church Schools. The school has excellent links with the Diocese and staff and governors are encouraged to attend Diocesan training events. There are valuable links with other schools in the area, including a local school for children with special educational needs. In the light of the new federation, the mission statement would benefit from being reviewed in the near future by the rector, headteacher designate and staff, to ensure that it represents the thoughts and aspirations of all stakeholders and as such it should also include the views of the parents and children.