



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Marton-cum-Grafton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Reas Lane
Marton-cum-Grafton
YO51 9QB

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Dates of inspection: 2nd December 2014

Date of last inspection: November 2009

School's unique reference number: 121632

Headteacher: Marie-Louise Thirlaway

Inspector's name and number: Doug Masterton 483

School context

Marton-cum-Grafton is a smaller than average village school of 94 children aged 3 – 11 years, taught in four mixed-age classes. The majority of pupils are White British and are drawn from the village and the surrounding districts lying between Boroughbridge, Knaresborough and York. The proportions of children eligible for free school meals and having special educational needs are both well below average. The parish church lies within sight of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Marton-cum-Grafton as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- A tangible spirituality pervades this school. It inspires and nurtures children's outstanding academic and personal development through excellent provision and by Christian values being applied to all aspects of school life.
- Outstanding collective worship and Religious Education gives children confidence to think critically, respond reflectively to the challenge of Christian teaching and to pray unselfconsciously for the needs of others.
- Management and governance is highly effective. The school is a key partner in sustaining the vigour of the parish and village community.

Areas to improve

- Set out with greater clarity the Christian values being promoted within the school mission in order to inspire continued enhancement of the character of the curriculum and to support tracking of children's spiritual development,
- Encourage children to record how they are applying Christian values in their school work and lives and thus become more conscious of their growing maturity and spiritual development.

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

Marton-cum-Grafton school was inspected by OFSTED in October 2014 and graded as outstanding in every aspect. The report specifically noted the church school ethos. It is the Christian character of the school that has brought about and sustained the outstanding achievement and personal development of the children. In a powerful ethos of care, support, respect and tolerance, the school ensures that all children flourish. Through offering many responsibilities and opportunities for service, for example in leading collective worship or joining the school council, children contribute greatly to the quality of school life and provision. This is a community where excellent relationships at all levels lead directly to fulfilment for both children and staff. Any disputes are resolved through a clear code fostering forgiveness, apology and reconciliation. Children grow to become kind, caring, joyful, committed, curious, open-minded, keen to learn and willing to challenge intellectually the ideas that they meet. Nurtured by a rich curriculum, a stimulating learning environment and many extra-curricular activities that promote Christian values in all areas of their work, children's personal and spiritual development is outstanding. Indicative of this is that from an early age they become confident to use prayer, to write them and to lead prayer publically. There is a tangible spirituality throughout the school fostered by the frequent and natural use of collective prayer. The school maintains links with communities in Africa and the Far-East and children support their peers abroad through charitable giving. They are also taught about the different faiths and cultural traditions and the school arranges visits to a mosque, synagogue and gurdwara in order that children may meet people of a different faith and culture. Children also have the opportunity to meet others living in different social contexts in other areas of the county. Thus they develop a sound understanding and respect for other diverse communities. Religious Education (RE) is a beacon subject. Together with collective worship it is used as the key route for children to understand and apply the Christian values that the school embodies and ideas from RE permeate many aspects of the curriculum.

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

Collective worship forms the backbone of school life and work. It nurtures and inspires the whole school community, reaching out to parents, parish worshippers and the whole village. All collective worship is fully inclusive; it is a joyous experience for those who take part and one in which children have a major role. Strategically planned by the Head Teacher, collective worship is rooted in the teaching of Jesus and other stories from the Bible. It reflects the church calendar and uses Anglican traditions including church colours, symbols, lighted candles, responses, music and prayer as well as much active participation by those present. Much impact is achieved by drawing upon children's confidence to offer prayers that inspire others to pray with them and say Amen. Children have also seen how a baptism is performed and understand Holy Communion through their participation in an AGAPE service for Easter where bread is shared. Collective worship is led by all members of the teaching staff and visitors including governors and the parish priest whose contribution is widely recognised as upholding and enriching the character of the school. The contribution from children is outstanding. Many are committed and confident to lead worship for example able to introduce the theology of Advent, and to encourage their peers to hold a small cross and contribute personal prayers including some offered in response to events outside the life of the school. Children lead collective worship in their class, in church for the whole community and at frequent special 'sharing assemblies' when many parents attend. They are very keen to do much more and know that their teachers will welcome this and encourage them. The school promotes an understanding of the Trinity and children speak about three aspects of God and the Biblical events that have revealed them. Collective worship is evaluated at every level, particularly by governors and not least by children themselves who are very self-critical about the contributions they have made.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education is a key component of children's experience at Marton-cum-Grafton. It is taught for at least one hour each week but this time is supplemented within topics across the curriculum and within themed weeks. A robust and secure system of assessment shows that children reach standards that are well above average and that they make excellent progress usually exceeding that in their core subjects of mathematics and English. Teaching is consistently good and frequently outstanding as confirmed by school monitoring and the inspection. Such quality can be seen for example in lessons linked to Advent that include older children studying the representation of the Annunciation through different Schools of Art or younger children using empathy to view the message from different perspectives. Teaching builds on children's previous understanding and promotes their thinking so that as they become older they are confidently able to tackle, discuss and challenge ideas that are difficult for example the veracity of the Easter story. Children are confident to argue, to question what they are taught and respectful of opinions that individually they might not share. In conjunction with school collective worship, RE powerfully develops children's maturity and spirituality. Children propose the idea of prayer as a valid process, applicable even in the absence of any faith, which can enable someone to reflect before approaching a personal challenge or responding individually to events that concern them. Aply led by the Head Teacher and confidently delivered by teaching staff, RE offers a rich curriculum inspired by the diocesan syllabus and supplemented with other resources that focus on Christianity but that also teaches understanding of other faiths. Its content and approach spreads frequently and naturally into other areas of the curriculum.

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

Governors of Marton-cum-Grafton school regularly review the school aims. Their mission is clear: seeking to develop each child's unique educational and spiritual gifts within a Christian environment of tolerance, understanding, care and forgiveness and enabling all to aspire, believe and achieve. Underlying Christian values such as wisdom, endurance, compassion and service are actively promoted in school but not explicitly described. They are, nevertheless, lived out at every level and applied to whatever the school attempts. During her eleven years of service to the school the head teacher has patiently and expertly developed the whole school community: growing confidence, inspiring ambition for excellence, building up skills and welcoming the success that others achieve. She also supports work in other church schools. It is not just the children who seek to do more. The small number of staff are confident to take on and share all the many responsibilities including those stemming from the ambitious aims of this church school. They are given support and encouragement to develop the requisite leadership skills. Staff and governors undertake high quality rigorous self-evaluation and strategic planning. Management and organisation is detailed and always reflects the ethos of the school. Arrangements for collective worship and religious education meet statutory requirements. The extent and quality of governors monitoring and evaluation is exceptional and they bring many valuable professional skills to the task of enhancing the work of the school. Issues from the previous inspection concerning children's awareness of diversity, monitoring and evaluation and improvement in RE have all been robustly tackled and have led towards to outstanding effectiveness. Marton-cum-Grafton school is a focus for the life of the whole village community and the parish church and the partnership is exceptional. Children often contribute to church worship and the line between school collective worship and that of the parish is blurred. The school works actively through the diocese to cooperate with other church schools. Parents hold the school in great regard, their views on its effectiveness and character are sought and respected. They speak enthusiastically of how they have seen their children cared for individually and thus grow academically and spiritually. They are particularly moved by the issues, questions and prayers that their children take home.