

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Norton Free Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Matthews Lane

Norton

Sheffield

S8 8JS

Diocese: Sheffield

LA: Sheffield

Dates of inspection: 1 February 2012

Date of last inspection: 19 June 2009

School's unique reference number: 107106

Headteacher: Miss H Button

Inspector's name and number: David Shannon (617)

School context

Norton Free can trace its history back to the 1650s. It is now housed in a new building (dating from 2003) which is warm and well-maintained. The school comprises the full range of socio-economic groups although the number of pupils taking free school meals is below average. The headteacher has been in post for just over two years and leads a team of 30 staff to support a wide range of school activities.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Norton Free Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding.

This is an excellent church school with values, based on the teachings of Jesus, affecting every aspect of school life. It is a happy place where pupils, teachers and governors demonstrably care for and share with each other. The school and parish work hand in hand to strengthen the work of each other.

Established strengths

- Pupils are well taught, well supervised and care for each other and their school
- The staff team is well led, works well together and their skills complement each other
- The governors are dedicated and supportive and care deeply for the future success of the school

Focus for development

- To develop a formal structure to evaluate the impact on pupils of collective worship, involving governors in its planning and operation
- To develop further assessment in RE to enable pupils to understand how to improve their level of attainment
- To increase links with other communities to enable parents and their children to appreciate other cultures and understand belief systems other than their own

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

Pupils, staff, parents and governors identify clearly the Christian values of the school and this has an impact across a diverse range of activities. As the recent Ofsted noticed, "Very warm and caring relationships between adults and children, along with the bright, lively, well organised and resourced learning environment, ensure that children quickly find out that learning is enjoyable and exciting." Frequently pupils named "the work which we do" as some of their favourite activities in school. Christian values are emphasised across everything the school does, so that pupils are readily able to recognise the need for careful use of the environment in science or to identify physical activity as a way of ensuring your body is fit to enable you to realise your potential. There are plenty of clubs and extra curricular activities which include street dance, bench ball and music tuition. These enable all children to find something to inspire and stimulate them. On inspection day, Y2 went to the over-55s club to conduct a display of Scottish dancing. There is a School Council which has helped shape and operate the school conduct code and who enthusiastically explain how good conduct is promoted by the green, amber, red card system related to the award of

golden time. There are playground leaders, who assist teachers and other adults in making break an enjoyable time for all. Behaviour throughout the school is good and personal relationships excellent. A recently completed cross on the front of school identifies it as a church school and acts as a reminder of its ethos for pupils and the whole community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

All members of the school community, regardless of background, feel included and affirmed by collective worship. This enables them to link how they work and behave with what is said in collective worship; one girl was encouraged to pray and to use the prayer point in her classroom to get others to pray also, another realised she was at times a bully and was then determined to treat others more tolerantly. Learners know the Lord's Prayer and its provenance and the school prayer and one class proudly showed their prayer tree; Norton Free pupils are able to understand and use both personal and corporate times of prayer. Worship is led by all staff in turn; the headteacher takes a strong lead in planning and conducting worship and there was audible enthusiasm to greet each choice of song. Drama is also frequently used; Y6 brought to life the baptism of Christ by John. An assembly record is kept in a log, but the school is anxious to engage pupils and governors in evaluating collective worship and being involved in its future planning and delivery. Parents and governors attend every Friday assembly which is a celebration of the school's academic, sporting and community involvement. There are frequent displays about the school to remind pupils of the current themes and messages of collective worship and pupils enjoy visits to St James' church and were preparing a Passion Play to put on there at Easter. Governors, staff and parents shaped a new collective worship policy in 2011, and the impact of this has been better links between RE and the daily act of worship. Pupils' horizons are broadened to include non-Judaistic faiths and global issues. Pupils know when they have produced good work in RE, but are unclear as to how their progress compares with that of others; the impact of this is that they do not know their level in RE compared with their ready knowledge of their literacy and numeracy levels. There are good links with a special school in Sheffield City and an Eid festival theme was mutually well received by both schools; similar links are being explored with some other faith groups in Sheffield, including both Sikh and Hindu communities. A good collection of faith symbols and artefacts enriches RE lessons. Hence RE is promoting pupils' understanding of the local, national and global communities and their own responsibility in promoting harmonious relationships and tolerance of others.

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

The headteacher has been in post just over two years and has helped the school to develop its Christian ethos in ways which connect more fully with its community. All staff undertook two days of thinking and planning together to map out and foster the Christian ethos. All stakeholders, led by the headteacher, are engaged in regular reviews of the school's activities as a church school. The headteacher's role is as stimulator and enabler, as Ofsted observed: "The headteacher provides a clear vision of where and how to improve achievement. Her accurate evaluation of school's effectiveness stems from rigorous monitoring of the quality of provision." Hence all staff understand how forgiveness, reconciliation and sacrificial love are the mortar which bind the school community together. Pupils know where the boundaries are and exclusions are very rare. Increasingly the governors' role has developed from supporters to critical friends of the school, and this new role provides valuable advice to the headteacher on financial, community and spiritual developments. The rector is a frequent visitor to foster links between St James' Church and the school community. The governors love the school, the children and their parents and this is clear in their vision for the school's enhanced role in its community. They are prepared to move from sitting in classes to helping monitor and evaluate to promote further success for the school. The school is an active member of the Meadowhead Community Learning Trust, but is careful to retain its Christian distinctiveness. Staff are well deployed, with teaching assistants taking significant steps in sharing learning, welfare and enhancement activities; a nurture room has been created. Pupils proudly showed off this area at break-time and praised its development as a quiet place in a busy and crowded building, where pastoral and listening skills were taught to small groups. Parents give voluntarily of their time and talents and the mixed football team has met success against primaries with much larger numbers on roll. Parents like the school for its ethos, size, location and safety.