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The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Baldersby St James' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Baldersby
Thirsk
North Yorkshire
YO7 4PT

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: York

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Date of inspection: 27 November 2014

Date of last inspection: December 2009

School's unique reference number: 121478

Headteacher: Keeley Ungerechts

Inspector's name and number: Paul Bramley 326

School context

Positioned in rural North Yorkshire, Baldersby St James' Church of England Primary school serves the local village and community. The school has 34 pupils and is therefore much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Almost all of the children are of White British heritage. The number of children with mild special educational needs is well above average as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium. Since the last SIAS inspection the school has appointed an Executive Headteacher who is shared with a local school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Baldersby as a Church of England school are good

- A clear and distinctive Christian vision is articulated by all connected to the school, ensuring that all children are cared for and supported as children of God.
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation leads to successful action planning and results in improvements in outcomes for pupils.
- Well-established links between school, church and local community are mutually supportive and beneficial.
- Children's involvement in planning, leading and evaluating acts of worship gives them a great sense of ownership of and commitment to worship.

Areas to improve

- Use the findings from monitoring and evaluation to secure sustainable improvement in pupils' academic progress and to build on existing strengths as a church school.
- Develop areas for spiritual reflection within the beautiful school grounds in order to



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provide increased opportunities for children to pray and reflect.

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

The Christian ethos is at the very centre of this school emanating from a collective vision shared by the executive headteacher, governors, church and school. This ensures that all feel valued and respected. Since the last inspection much has been achieved to ensure that Baldersby's profile as a Church of England primary school is celebrated and developed. The links with the church are very strong with the present incumbent playing a prominent role in the life of the school. The school's four selected Christian values: hope, perseverance, community and respect, undoubtedly influence the lives of all connected to the school and underpin the family atmosphere created. They are very evident in the relationships observed, particularly through the nurturing nature of staff. Well targeted actions have secured improvements in pupils' learning and progress so that achievement is now good in most areas. The school rule is articulated by all at every opportunity, and the aim 'to be polite, friendly and happy', impacts positively on pupils' behaviour. Their moral and social development is therefore good. Parents comment on how delighted they are with what the school offers and how much children enjoy coming to school. The impact of this is seen in excellent attendance. Within the curriculum, Religious Education (RE) is given a high priority. Theme weeks focussing on such topics as Islam and Hinduism, supported by visits to mosques and temples, provide a good insight into a range of diverse cultures different from their own. Areas for spiritual reflection are evident within the school. For example, the prayer tree where children write and display poems for loved ones. Opportunities for reflection in the school's grounds are limited. Children would welcome the development of such areas so they can sit quietly to pray or reflect in beautiful surroundings.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is at the heart of this school, underpinned by a good collective worship policy. All staff contribute to the daily acts of worship. Visits from the local vicar and a minister from the local Baptist church take place on a regular basis, ensuring that children experience an interesting range of styles and approaches to worship. Planning is thorough and follows the church calendar, with Anglican symbolism and practice evident via the use of the candle, Bible, and the liturgical colours. Learners show some understanding of The Holy Trinity. For example, they write about 'the Father, Son and Holy Ghost' in prayers prepared for acts of worship. Parents enjoy coming into school on a regular basis to experience collective worship and talk with enthusiasm about the roles that their children play in this aspect of school life. Children totally engage with worship and respond with enthusiasm to opportunities to sing, pray and reflect. Questioning by leaders is often challenging, encouraging deep reflection from those taking part. For example, children are asked to consider if one should always offer thanks, even for something unkind or unfair. The school successfully involves children in the planning, presenting and evaluation of worship. They talk about collective worship with passion and reflect exceptionally well upon the success of the worship with which they have been involved. Their evaluations are honest with comments ranging from 'improve seating arrangements', to 'give more time for answers' noted. This strategy for reflection encourages children to adjust and adapt worship so that it is meaningful for all ages. Pupils attend church for all of the major Christian festivals and take part in role play to learn about baptism and weddings. Some pupils



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attend classes for confirmation. Such activity gives the whole school an excellent understanding of the life and values of the church.

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

Sustainable progress and improvement are at the forefront of the aims of the leadership team at the school. The new executive headteacher has successfully established a sense of team and an ethos of striving for excellence rooted in an explicit Christian vision. This vision impacts positively on pupils in terms of their learning and well-being. The headteacher and chair of governors bring a huge amount to the school in terms of experience and ambition and have quickly secured improvement in the school's effectiveness. All connected to the school are aware that academic achievement is improving and that such progress now needs to be maintained. Governors are involved in monitoring and evaluating all aspects of school life including worship and the school's distinctiveness. Foundation governors provide an excellent link with the church, constantly reporting to colleagues on developments within both settings. Their findings inform clear and precise plans for development. Recent evaluations have identified actions that would help the school to reach outstanding, something that is a primary aim of the ambitious leadership at the school. Areas for development from the previous inspection have been met in full and statutory requirements are met. Current development plans include targets for RE and for the continued development of children's involvement with collective worship. Leadership of RE and collective worship are good with staff constantly seeking ways of increasing children's involvement in their own learning and worship. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good ensuring that children develop as confident and caring learners. Relationships with parents, carers and the local community are excellent. The school also enjoys a helpful partnership with local educational settings and the Diocese of York, thus benefiting from professional development opportunities and support. Governors are heavily involved in succession planning, researching innovative and appropriate models of leadership to ensure the sustainability and progression of the school.

SIAMS report November 2014 Baldersby CE Primary, Baldersby YO7 4PT