

Richmond Methodist Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Darlington Road
Richmond
DL10 7BH

Darlington Methodist District – North Yorkshire Dales Circuit

Local authority: North Yorkshire
Dates of inspection: 18th May, 2012
Date of last inspection: January, 2006
School's unique reference number: 121544
Headteacher: Mr Mark Allison
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Linda Hodson (314)

School context

Richmond Methodist is a large primary school with 308 pupils on roll. It draws pupils from the market town of Richmond and surrounding area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals or having special educational needs is below average. Most of the current staff team have joined the school since the last inspection, including the headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Richmond (VC) Primary School as a Methodist school are good

The school's Methodist heritage is proudly celebrated and is reflected in an inclusive and supportive environment for learning. Under the guidance of the headteacher and a dedicated staff team pupils thrive and develop as confident, self-motivated and successful learners.

Established strengths

- A genuine inclusive approach to education, reflecting core Methodist principles.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher who is held in high regard by all.
- Excellent relationships between all members of the school community ensure that any problems are speedily addressed and resolved in a spirit of reconciliation and justice.

Focus for development

- Support those who lead worship on a voluntary basis, through the sharing of best practice, to ensure that all acts of worship are equally accessible and engaging.
- Ensure that all leaders, including governors, become familiar with the new SIAS inspection framework from 2013 and use this to structure their monitoring.
- Enhance provision for cultural development through linking with a school in a contrasting and more culturally diverse locality.

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

The Methodist principle of providing education for all is reflected in this welcoming and inclusive school. Here all pupils are respected and valued as unique individuals, whatever their background or educational needs. A strong ethos, underpinned by Christian values, impacts positively on pupils' personal development. This is evidenced in their good behaviour and in the care and compassion they show for others, particularly through their support for charities. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in good levels of attendance. Parents are appreciative of the standard of care provided and recognise that their children achieve well academically because of the good teaching they receive. They feel that they are full partners in their children's education and that the school responds quickly if ever there are any problems. Opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are provided across the curriculum as well as in religious education (RE) and

collective worship. Effective questioning by teachers helps pupils to reflect and think more deeply about a range of issues and to relate these to their own lives. Achievement in these areas is therefore good. Evidence of the school's distinctive Christian character and Methodist heritage is more widely found within the school than at the last inspection, particularly within displays of art work. The learning environment is attractive and is used effectively to encourage further personal reflection and support spiritual growth. For example, pupils are prompted to respond to questions such as "How have you helped others?" The memorial garden, within the school grounds, is also seen as a place where "you can go to be quiet and think." Pupils' wider skills and talents, particularly those relating to sport and music, are further developed through a good range of extra-curricular activities. Individual successes are celebrated in the weekly celebration assembly. Pupils have a strong voice within the school, with the role of the school council being well developed. Their understanding of citizenship is further developed through community involvement and links with schools in Kenya and Ghana. The school recognises that the development of a link with a school in a more culturally diverse area within the UK would strengthen this provision still further.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

The school is proud of its Wesleyan heritage and sees worship as an important part of its distinctive provision. Governors routinely review the school's worship policy and ensure that a daily act of collective worship takes place which is of a broadly Christian character. A long-term plan for worship provides a clear overview of what is to be covered, and incorporates key events from the Christian calendar, as well as the exploration of social and moral issues. This provision supports pupils' personal development, celebrates their achievements and fosters spiritual growth. Pupils are able to describe the impact on their daily lives. For example, an older pupil said that hearing a story about good things coming in small packages helped her self-confidence, whilst another recognised that "you can show love for people you don't even know" through supporting charities such as Christian Aid. The Methodist Minister and members of other local church groups make a regular contribution to worship each Wednesday. Their input supports pupils' understanding of Christian festivals, Bible stories and Methodist traditions. The distance between the school and Richmond Methodist Church limits the school's use of the church for the celebration of major festivals but pupils do attend church on special occasions such as Education Sunday and Wesley Day. In line with recommendations from the previous inspection, the school regularly seeks the views of pupils in order to improve its practice. Recent self-evaluation confirms that most pupils enjoy worship. They listen attentively and make an enthusiastic response, particularly through singing and prayer. However, a small number express more negative views and are less willing to engage. The headteacher recognises the need to ensure that all acts of worship are equally accessible and engaging and is working with volunteer contributors to address this.

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

Senior leaders and governors uphold a vision for the school which is firmly founded on the Methodist principle of inclusion. The headteacher is held in high regard within the school community and provides strong leadership and direction. He is supported by a dedicated and hard-working staff team of teachers in upholding a strong Christian ethos in the school. Documentation now needs some updating to reflect more specifically the Christian values which underpin this ethos. Self-evaluation processes were at an early stage of development at the time of the last inspection, but are now well established. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. The way the school consults with stakeholders, and particularly with pupils, is a strength. Foundation governors are supportive of the school and contribute to the school's development as a church school through their roles as link governors for RE and collective worship and through policy review. Tailoring their monitoring more closely to the inspection framework would help to strengthen their contribution to self-evaluation. All governors are mindful of the need for succession planning and ensure that there is appropriate training and development to support this. Links with the local Methodist church and wider community are well established and contribute to the success of the school.