



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Norham St Ceolwulf's Voluntary Controlled First School

Norham-on-Tweed
Northumberland
TD15 2JZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Satisfactory

Diocese: Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland

Dates of inspection: 2 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 21 October 2010

School's unique reference number: 135064

Headteacher: Michele O'Donnell

Inspector's name and number: Canon Brian Hedley NS619

School context

St Ceolwulf's is a small rural first school serving the village of Norham-on-Tweed and surrounding area. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational need is lower than average. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Ceolwulf's as a Church of England school are satisfactory

- The dedicated leadership and unrelenting commitment of the headteacher is driving the school forward and beginning to embed its Christian ethos
- There is an upward trend in levels of attainment because the headteacher has been quick to analyse under-performance and instigate a range of support for vulnerable groups
- Following recent training, governors have become more pro-active and, as a result, have a better understanding of their role in strategic planning, development and self-evaluation
- Parents are extremely positive about the genuine partnership they now have with the school; they applaud the huge changes brought about over the last eighteen months

Areas to improve

- Accelerate progress in Y4 so the historic gap between these pupils and other learners is closed and they are in the best place possible before moving on to secondary school
- Secure better governance by embedding the SIAMS evaluation schedule into strategic planning and analysis of performance data, so that the Christian character of the school is identified and benchmarked robustly
- Ensure that as policies are renewed, core Christian values are made explicit throughout and a clear link made to raising achievement

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

The school is improving because over the last eighteen months the headteacher has galvanised everyone into seeing that they have a personal responsibility to drive up standards. As a result, most pupils are now making good progress. The historic under-achievement of some Y4 pupils has yet to be fully eliminated, but they are now making significant gains because of appropriate care and challenge. Staff and children are working hard to remove any barriers to learning. Most teaching is now judged to be good; some of it is outstanding. This means that any issues are addressed quickly and everyone can get on with striving for rapid improvement.

Pupils were keen to explain that this is a happy place; 'there is a lot of fun'; 'we look after each other – not just children, but our teachers, visitors, people from the community and in the world – as well as wildlife and school equipment'. When I asked why they did this, they explained that the school's values come from the stories Jesus told and that if we all follow them every day it makes the world a better place. One child said that, 'Christian values affect our behaviour and how we learn', and another that, 'they change how we act in front of others and at home'. Other learners agreed; they liked the fact that rewards are now given if they are seen to be living out the values; they would like to give each other rewards when they see that, too. Parents say that the children are 'well cared for' and that this has become 'such a good school since the new head arrived'. One told me that, 'my child is the happiest he has ever been', and another that, 'children are nurtured; their self-confidence grows; they are each given a role - a place - and that role really counts'. The high quality of care extends to families and staff too; many offered examples demonstrating the lasting impact on them, especially at times of crisis. Religious Education (RE) is beginning to contribute towards the Christian character of the school. It is helping learners to unpick values and is challenging their thinking about diversity and difference. More needs to be done to set Christianity within the context of multi-cultural world faiths, perhaps by forming direct contact with Christians abroad. The tracking of progress in RE is emerging; more impetus is required if the assessment system is to be truly meaningful. There is no doubt that over the last eighteen months the school has achieved greater status as a Christian hub. As the village continues to expand, the challenge for governors is to develop a growing understanding of Christian ethos so learners and adults can make decisions about personal faith, both in school and in the wider community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Daily collective worship is a well-established strength. It lies at the heart of school life and gives the whole community a variety of opportunities to come together, to share liturgy, prayer and praise, and to learn more through the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Elements of the Christian faith and the context of worship are never forced; parents said that, 'the good thing is, that it's all done not too seriously, and that keeps it accessible – no-one feels uncomfortable'. Even children who do not profess a faith talked about how important worship time is, because 'we can all learn something from the stories; they make you think'. Analysis of collective worship by children, parents, and school leadership indicates a growing and developing spirituality at a personal level. Also recorded is the impact of attentive listening; enthusiastic, active participation; personal responses made; time for stillness, reflection and prayer; good singing; lots of sharing; a growing sense of belonging and joint responsibility for one another and the world. The celebration of Christian festivals follows the Church's year. Careful planning ensures that other significant events in the life of the school and community are marked appropriately. Worship underpins the values of the school; pupils are able to link Bible stories to them and discuss possible implications for their own lives. The parish priest is very skilled at talking to pupils and parents. His support and genuine concern is acknowledged as a strength of the school's pastoral care. Governors need to monitor their policy for collective worship more formally. Training in use of the SIAMS schedule to assist in this would lead to more effective analysis and evaluation of their current observation records.

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

Since her appointment, the headteacher has worked relentlessly to define a clear direction for the school and to underpin this with a strong Christian ethos. In her own words, 'I want the children to name what we live'. This has not been easy. However, lately, effective staff and recent governor training have placed shared responsibility for human flourishing at the forefront of everyone's mind. Although governors say they feel much more empowered since the head's appointment because of her coaching and facilitating, still too much of the strategic leadership, management and evaluation is left in her hands; she has a heavy teaching commitment, too. Governors must continue to explore ways of supporting the headteacher with their expertise. Many of them have begun to 'take note' and try very seriously to share the responsibility and accountability for standards, safeguarding and finance. This is to be applauded. To extend their role further, they need to use the SIAMS framework and schedule as self-evaluation tools to plan and evaluate improvement strategies. Development points from the last report have been achieved, but only by the current leadership. Nevertheless this is evidence of a renewed commitment and determination to develop the school as a church school.

Teaching and learning continue to improve and standards show an upward trend. From typical starting points Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid progress; Year 1 children exceed their expected levels of progress; current Year 2 pupils make the strongest gains and are a very capable group; Y3 pupils are well on track; there is still some work to do in relation to historic under-performance of pupils in Year 4. However the headteacher and governors already have a robust action plan to address these issues and so close the gap. Parents speak warmly and positively about the relationship they now have with the school and are especially appreciative of the fact that they have a real voice. Being asked for their input and opinions and having the chance to meet with governors on parents' evenings, means that they are 'not scared to approach anyone these days'. Parents were keen to point out that their children receive exceptional care here and that this extends to families and community members, too. Curriculum meetings, more specific homework, better general communication over the last eighteen months and a warm, genuine welcome to both worship and celebration events received much praise.

Professional development opportunities are aligned to the school's improvement plan and performance management priorities. All of this is gradually contributing to the growing success of the school's leadership and management.

The relationship with the parish is strong. Children and parents say that as a result there is shared responsibility and a true sense of belonging.

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