

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hugh Joicey Church of England Voluntary Aided First School	
Ford Village Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland TD15 2QA	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Newcastle
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Northumberland
Date of inspection	25 November 2016
Date of last inspection	10 March 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	122291
Headteacher	Jacqueline Dalrymple
Inspector's name and number	Mary Cook NS 811

School context

Hugh Joicey CE VA School is a smaller than average first school situated in rural Northumberland, with 60 pupils on roll. There have been significant changes to staffing in the last twelve months. Due to long term absence through ill health and then the death of the headteacher, a senior member of staff became acting headteacher in January 2016 and has recently been confirmed as the full time substantive post holder. In July 2016 a highly experienced member of staff retired, having contributed much to the provision by supporting and developing Religious Education (RE) and collective worship. The recent Ofsted inspection judged the school as requires improvement. The school is supported by the Parish of Ford and Etal. A private provider operates a nursery provision on the school site.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hugh Joicey First School as a Church of England school are good

- The enthusiasm and determination of the newly appointed headteacher is driving the school forward to secure high quality education and in strengthening the distinctly Christian ethos.
- A well-established relationship between the church, community and the school contributes significantly to the values and practice within the school.
- Well planned and inclusive worship helps to structure the week and contributes to the spiritual development of all involved.

Areas to improve

- Further extend the ways in which pupils can evaluate, reflect and give a personal response to the worship themes to help them make connections so they can confidently articulate the Christian values which underpin the life of the school.
- Provide the RE subject leader and teaching staff with additional training and support so that clear assessment systems are in place to inform the planning and raise standards in the teaching of RE.
- Continue to develop the RE curriculum so that the children learn about a range of religions across the world and have some understanding of other faith communities.
- Formalise the self-evaluation of worship and RE, using the SIAMS framework as a reference, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of provision in order to further improve outcomes for children.

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

Hugh Joicey CE First School's strong commitment to the Christian values of service, hope and compassion is clearly seen in the life of the school, notably through collective worship. The headteacher is an excellent role model and ensures that the school ethos statement to provide 'Happy, healthy, aspirational learners in a Christian community' becomes a reality. Given the number of children on roll, there is an increasingly tailored curriculum to meet the needs of those in mixed aged classes. Attainment of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 shows a decline in standards however, in other year groups standards are in line with age related expectations. The specific needs of the Y3 cohort are being addressed with additional interventions which are specific to each child's needs.

The ethos is shown in the excellent interactions within school and the good behaviour of the children who are confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings. There is a symbiotic relationship between the local church and the school from which children, staff and parents have garnered support during a difficult period. The way in which the previous headteacher's illness was openly talked about, and the community prepared for her death, is regarded by many as exemplary. The Christian values embraced by the school helps the community to make sense of the loss and has acted as a catalyst for some to be more reflective about their own life. This impact is at all levels from the teacher who has recently chosen to be confirmed to the family who undertook a walk along Hadrian's Wall for charity.

The school has responded to the development points identified in the previous SIAS inspection by providing a Eucharist service and involving the children more in the delivery of collective worship. Parents are very supportive of the school and positive about the impact of the distinctive Christian ethos. One parent commented; 'It is different to other schools, we are a close knit community, everyone is in it together: the school distils kindness.' Pupils feel safe and find all staff approachable and fair in their responses, whatever the context, however they are still developing their vocabulary in order to describe the Christian values they show each and every day.

The teaching of RE, particularly Bible stories and rules to live by, makes a positive contribution to the overall ethos of the school, in that the children know right from wrong and are able to make informed decisions. However the curriculum lacks a global, multi-faith context for learning which results in the children being confused: they associate Christianity with the UK and other religions with under developed parts of the world.

The Forest School provision bolsters the holistic approach to education with a strong emphasis on the development of social skills. The awe and wonder of working in the woods also provides a special place to develop spirituality.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship has a significant impact on the life of the school: this is notable in the wholesome relationships established between the children and staff and the values demonstrated, especially when discussing the meaning of Bible stories in greater depth. The children show respect during worship, through good behaviour, readily contributing their own thoughts when invited to and are keen to take on additional responsibilities. The children are involved in the delivery of worship, as recommended in the last inspection, and are happy to read out the parts given to them by staff and clergy. However the pupils are now confident enough to contribute further to worship in church, such as the highly regarded Christingle and Harvest services as well as in school, by writing their own prayers to share and leading reflections. This will help the children develop their own spirituality and give them a sense of ownership.

The introduction of the Eucharist on a half termly basis is viewed by those who attend, including parents, as a positive step as the service is a direct link to the traditions of the church. The mutual support provided is very evident, particularly in the period of mourning following the headteacher's death. The opportunity to give thanks for her life and service at a recent Eucharist is greatly appreciated by the whole school community. Fittingly, the children share their memories, thoughts and prayers at a specially dedicated tree in the Forest School, a place nurtured and cherished by former headteacher. Worship is of a broadly Christian nature, based on the church year, with the inclusion of Anglican practice, readings from the Bible and traditional prayers.

There is scope to respond to local and national events and this is done with good effect such as linking a local flood to the story of Noah and the certainty of Christian hope. The children have an understanding of God as Father and Son, however are less secure on the concept of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. Pupils enjoy singing and learning modern hymns: these are used as a vehicle to convey the core values of the school in a fun and exciting manner. The school is well supported by the Rector of Ford and Etal, who is a governor and regular visitor to the school delivering collective worship, as agreed with teaching staff, and establishing a chaplaincy role for the whole school community. The new headteacher is keen for the school community including the pupils to take part in self-

evaluation of worship; this is still in its infancy so is yet to make a significant difference in terms of providing feedback to those who lead worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The school has adopted the Blackburn Diocesan RE syllabus: although some work has been undertaken to evaluate the impact of the scheme, such as an informal lesson observation, the school is lacking evidence of pupil achievement and the effectiveness of the RE curriculum. There are plans to develop a tracking system for RE, as an aid for planning and to show progress from the pupils' starting points. In Early Years, the children are encouraged to develop their knowledge of the world in the outdoor environment: they speak confidently about Bible stories. The quality of teaching in observations is satisfactory with some good elements; particularly the opportunity to interview a teacher recently confirmed, drawing out more information about Christian living. However, teaching is often differentiated by outcome rather than by tasks, as a result there is insufficient challenge for the more able children in Key Stage 2. Pupils value RE lessons, and can give examples of RE impacting on their actions such as: 'The Good Samaritan story changed me- it taught me to be more compassionate and to change my behaviour.' There are some good examples of feedback and marking in some of the pupils' books consistent with the learning objectives, but opportunities are missed to ask higher order questions and elicit a pupil response. The learners would like to have targets identified for them in RE as they do in other core subject areas. Pupils have limited understanding of the practices and beliefs of other faiths and cultures. The school is adjusting the curriculum planning to address this and to further knowledge of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. With the significant change in personnel, teaching staff have identified the need for training in teaching RE. Parents, although unclear about their child's achievement in RE, recognise the subject develops further awareness about Christianity and other faiths. The classroom environments reflect the importance of RE to the school with dedicated display space celebrating the children's thoughts and work.

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

The new headteacher, staff and governors place Christian values and ethos at the heart of this school and remain true to their vision even in times of great uncertainty. The governors respond well in times of crisis for example securing effective day to day leadership for the school: parents are grateful that there has been seamless transition in headship during the past year. The new headteacher is inspirational in terms of expressing a desire for all to flourish and has an inner strength attributed to personal resilience and creativity, both of which can be viewed as Christian characteristics. The headteacher is building on the legacy and traditions developed over time by the previous headteacher such as the Forest School and excellent relationships with the local church. However, she shows a good understanding of the current needs of the school and has implemented plans to bring about an improvement in standards particularly in the Year 3 cohort.

Leadership of RE has been in abeyance given the demands made of the new headteacher who is also subject leader however this is beginning to change. The school is aware that the children are not challenged sufficiently well to use higher order thinking skills and to make more worldly connections in RE. Staff have identified gaps in RE provision and strategies to correct this. The long and medium term plans are under review and a new context for the curriculum is to be introduced from January 2017 to ensure that the children have a better understanding of Christianity as a world faith and to introduce more teaching about other world faiths. Self-evaluation of the school as a church school is being developed however evidence is often anecdotal based on visits from the governors and their involvement in worship rather than being more formalised. Leaders intend to utilise the SIAMS framework to support their self-evaluation of the school as a church school.

The Chair of Governors is very involved with the life of the school and contributes to the formative years of the children by running the pre-school. As a result, there is an excellent transition and shared ethos with those families who attend the nursery, preparing them well for life in reception class. The school meets the statutory requirements for both collective worship and RE. There is a clear understanding of the need to develop future church school leaders, and the headteacher is proactive in supporting staff in leadership training. Parents are supportive of and involved in school life. They speak very positively of the care and support given to their children and value the Christian aspects of the school such as the emphasis on teaching love and respect for one another.