

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Tritlington Church of England Aided First School

Tritlington Morpeth NE61 3DU	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Newcastle
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority / Date of academy conversion [delete as appropriate]	Northumberland
Date of inspection	11 May 2017
Date of last inspection	28 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	First School 122299
Headteacher	Helen Hughes
Inspector's name and number	The Revd Canon Steven Harvey 891

School context

Tritlington Church of England Aided First School is a very small rural school with 54 pupils. The majority of pupils join the school from its own nursery unit. The small cohorts require mixed age and key stage classes. Over 85% of the pupils are White British, 18% receive SEND support, and 20% are known to be eligible for free school meals. Over the past five terms there has been a good deal of disruption to staffing, with temporary leadership and teaching solutions in place, and to membership of the governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Tritlington Church of England Aided First School as a Church of England school are good

- A vision and set of values which are rooted in Christian belief and teaching are articulated with conviction by the headteacher and governors, and this vision permeates the life and work of the school
- Pupils, parents and staff recognize the impact which the school's Christian character has on the life of the school community, and particularly on behaviour and relationships
- Collective worship has a high profile in the school and makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Areas to improve

- Ensure that procedures to enable governors to monitor and evaluate the life and work of the school effectively are firmly embedded, in order for these to inform and enable strategic planning to drive the school's improvement as a church school
- In RE, establish more systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, including differentiation and the development of skills, to inform planning and to drive improvement
- Ensure more regular evaluation of collective worship, by pupils and other stakeholders, to inform planning and to ensure a stronger sense of ownership of collective worship by the whole school community
- Ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding of diversity within the Christian faith is enhanced through study of both the Anglican tradition and other denominations

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

The school's Christian values are clearly displayed throughout the school. Pupils have chosen three of these values – love, friendship, and perseverance – as the most important ones. These three values are displayed in a logo with the word 'love' at its heart – because, said one pupil, love is 'the core'. Pupils speak of the importance of the school being a church school and recognise the impact this has on their lives. Behaviour and relationships reflect the school's Christian character and values. The school has a high proportion of pupils with special needs. This experience evokes from pupils a genuine acceptance of difference and a concern to care for and support others. Pupils look out for each other, and the buddy system is highly valued. Pupils report that there is no bullying in the school, that they know who to turn to if they have a problem, and that they feel safe. They value such things as the 'Biff worry toy' and being able to share their concerns in a caring and supportive environment.

Every child is regarded as a unique child of God, to be loved and nurtured. An impressive butterfly display in the hall has a butterfly for each pupil, together with their photograph, and contains the words: 'Unless you spread your wings you'll have no idea how far you can fly'. This display reflects the school's commitment to nurturing high aspirations. The 'expert of the week' scheme promotes pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence, and the achievers' board celebrates their achievements. Staff, parents and governors speak convincingly of how the school's Christian character raises aspirations and has a significant effect on pupils' learning and on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils make steady progress in their work. Most pupils reach the standards expected of them at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Following the recent Ofsted inspection, attention is being given to ensuring that more pupils, including the more able, achieve above age-related expectations. Attendance is improving and is now broadly average.

Pupils are encouraged and enabled to explore their spirituality, not only through collective worship but also through opportunities to experience awe and wonder in the extensive and attractive outside area and through such experiences as observing the hatching of eggs. Pupils have a strong moral compass and a genuine concern, expressed through such charitable activities as supporting Jeans for Genes, for those less fortunate than themselves. A development point from the last inspection was to provide opportunities for the children to access a more culturally diverse community. The school has responded to this by, for example, sharing the experience of a visit to Africa by two of the school's families and by including virtual visits to the places of worship of other faith communities.

The school is a warm, friendly and welcoming community. Parents speak of a family atmosphere in which pupils feel loved, where they thrive, and where no one is left behind. One parent said that pupils bring the school's ethos 'into our home'. Another spoke of this ethos widening pupils' outlook and developing their understanding of, and respect for, diversity, and of her confidence that this ethos will enable pupils to live well as adults in a multi-faith and multi-cultural world. These comments are widely shared by parents.

RE makes a valuable contribution to the school's Christian character and values, and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has a high profile in the school and makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character. Collective worship is well planned. The scheme used ensures that collective worship is distinctively Christian, biblically based, and provides a balanced coverage of the Christian year and of Christian belief. Pupils speak of enjoying collective worship, and particularly the opportunity to contribute to dramatic enactments of biblical stories. They value how collective worship helps them to learn about the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and about how faith contributes to daily life. One pupil said that 'collective worship helps us to be kind'. The impact of collective worship is seen in the excellent relationships which exist between pupils.

In collective worship, pupils are attentive, engaged, and keen to respond to questions. Themes are related to biblical teaching and to the school's core values. Collective worship makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. For example, the use of photographs evoking awe and wonder, the time given for reflection, and the opportunity to pray about the issues raised all contribute to the spiritual nurturing of the pupils. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer and are comfortable using prayers from the Christian tradition and those which they write themselves. The invitation to say 'Amen' at the end of a prayer only if the prayer reflects an individual's own beliefs ensures that collective worship is inclusive. The practice of prayer extends beyond collective worship to the well-used prayer trees and the reflection notice board. The prayers which pupils leave are often for other pupils, reflecting the strong concern which pupils have for each other. Collective worship also makes a notable contribution to pupils' moral development. Engaging and often challenging photographic resources, good questioning, and the invitation to share thoughts and ideas, lead pupils to think about the kind of world they would like to live in, and about how human beings have a responsibility to build such a world. The pupils are helped to think creatively about global issues.

Collective worship also takes place in the parish church at Hebron, where end of term services and other celebrations are well supported by parents and carers. Parishioners contribute regularly to collective worship, and one spoke of being impressed by the pupils' knowledge of the Christian tradition. This knowledge is almost exclusively of the Anglican

tradition, not least because no other Christian denomination has a church building in the parish.

Collective worship is usually led by staff or visitors, although Year 4 pupils have the opportunity to plan and lead an act of worship each year. This is usually related to a charity. Fundraising for a variety of charities, related to the children's interests and often to family connections, is a feature of the pupils' concern for those less fortunate than themselves.

The last inspection report had the establishing of a formal evaluation of collective worship by a range of stakeholders as a focus for development, and some progress has been made with this. The parish priest conducted an evaluation during the last academic year, and pupils' views are sought in an annual survey. Following the most recent pupil survey, the school responded to requests for more action songs, and for more opportunities to act out bible stories.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

In RE, standards of attainment for the majority of pupils are in line with national expectations. Pupils make steady progress, and some make more than expected progress. There is some good teaching. A range of teaching methods, including discussion and creative activities, is used. Among the good variety of resources employed, the use of art is particularly effective in evoking individual responses. Attention is given to developing pupils' skills in enquiry and reflection. In the nursery, where good foundations are laid for future work, pupils are encouraged to explore where things come from. Links are made with the biblical story of creation, with Christian teaching, and with the school's core values. Pupils are given opportunities to choose activities in which they can be creative themselves, and to talk about their creations, and this is effective in developing their thinking skills. Lessons build on pupils' prior learning. Pupils' work is usually well marked, often with good questions to extend pupils' thinking, enabling them to understand what they are achieving and how to progress further.

The role of RE coordinator is currently being exercised by the headteacher. This additional demand on the headteacher's time is limiting the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in RE, particularly differentiation and the development of higher order skills. The absence of effective monitoring and evaluation is also limiting the school's ability to plan to raise attainment. The school recognizes this as an area for development. The intention is to appoint, and ensure training for, a new RE coordinator before the end of the current academic year.

The RE curriculum allocates the majority of teaching time to Christianity, and enables pupils to develop a good understanding of the Christian faith. Each year, some time is given to the study of another faith. The work on Judaism, for example, includes a virtual visit to a synagogue. This work helps to develop pupils' understanding of, and respect for, religious and cultural diversity. The majority of pupils engage well with the subject and understand the contribution it makes to the school's Christian character and core values, and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

The headteacher and governors are committed to the school as a church school. They articulate and promote, from personal conviction, a vision which is rooted in Christian belief about the value and potential of every person as a child of God and in Christian teaching about love. This vision embraces the whole school community, regardless of whether or not pupils or parents and carers have a religious faith. They describe convincingly the impact of this vision on pupils' personal development, on their behaviour and relationships, and on their learning.

Following the recent Ofsted inspection, more robust systems of monitoring and evaluation are being put in place. For example, new assessment procedures for reading, writing and mathematics have been introduced, and the headteacher is providing more detailed reports to governors. These are helping governors to understand more fully the impact of teaching on learning, and to be more effective in asking probing questions about targets and outcomes. They also have the potential to inform their strategic planning to ensure that the school, through its distinctive Christian character, is the best it can be in meeting the needs of all learners.

Financial constraints have limited the opportunities for the professional development of staff. Some training has, however, been done. A teaching assistant is currently following a programme on social and emotional development which is being particularly helpful in the school's work with its SEND pupils. Training courses offered by the diocese are helping governors to feel more confident about their ability to plan effectively for leadership succession.

The school's partnership with the local Anglican church is strong and mutually nurturing. Parishioners speak of 'doing church' in the school, and describe their contribution to the school's worshipping life as helping them to become stronger in their own faith. The school's partnership with parents and carers is also strong. Parents view the school staff as very approachable, and they value the regular opportunities provided by parent focus groups to discuss a wide range of issues. Parents appreciate the welcoming and inclusive nature of the school community.

Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Leaders have ensured that the areas for development identified in the last inspection report, in 2012, have been addressed.