



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Whitley Chapel Church of England First School

Leazes Lane  
Steel  
Hexham  
NE470HB

**Previous SIAS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Newcastle**

Local authority: Northumberland

Dates of inspection: Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Date of last inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009

School's unique reference number: 122293

Headteacher: Jenny Morgan

Inspector's name and number: Paul Rickeard NS800

#### School context

Whitley Chapel First School serves the rural area of Hexhamshire, Northumberland. The school was graded "good" in all categories by Ofsted in 2014; it is smaller than the average size primary school with 24 pupils aged 4-9. The school has few pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities and indices of deprivation are low compared to the national average. The number of children eligible for Free School Meals is low (11.5%).

Since the previous SIAS inspection the senior leadership team has changed including the appointment of a new Head Teacher.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whitley Chapel First School as a Church of England school are good.

- Strong relationships throughout the school community are based on Christian Values and create a strong, nurturing environment for learning and growth
- Strong links between the school, local church and community result in sustained and mutually beneficial partnerships
- Values-based teaching and meaningful acts of collective worship deepen pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure that core values permeate all aspects of school life so that stakeholders share fully in their ongoing development and have a deeper understanding of Christian distinctiveness.
- Develop the use of the new RE scheme of work and assessment of RE to echo the approach taken across core subjects within school
- Support pupils effectively in planning, leading and evaluating collective worship

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

All members of the school community understand and clearly articulate the school's Christian Values; as a result relationships are strong and behaviour is at least good. These values are evident in daily life - the friendly, calm and purposeful working environment means pupils are happy, safe, valued and make good progress. Pupils are able to talk reflectively about the Christian values of trust, understanding, respect and friendship in relation to their own lives and they know how these relate to the teachings of Jesus. Children, staff, Governors and parents are keen to acclaim that this school is a 'family' school – everyone is valued, and as one parent said, 'you never feel judged by anyone here'. Pupils have a good attitude to learning and benefit from an exciting curriculum. This, together with a good range of extra-curricular activities, meets the needs of individual learners well. Parents recognise the increasingly distinct Christian ethos of the school and feel a part of what is happening. Numerous examples were given of the outcomes of the values-based curriculum; for example the ability of children across the age-range interacting well with one another and applying core values of love and forgiveness. The teaching of RE provides pupils with a good knowledge and understanding of world-wide faiths. Displays and the Reflective Corner with the Special Chair in the hall, contribute well to the opportunities for children to reflect, and develop a spiritual awareness.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.**

Collective worship is at the heart of the school and takes place at the start of every day. It is planned around a cycle of themes that are based upon the Anglican Calendar and include the school's chosen core Christian Values. There are plenty of opportunities for children to pray formally throughout the school day but there could be more done to encourage times of personal prayer at other times. Worship is respected and enjoyed by everyone – in particular the time spent by the local Vicar, who every week leads family prayers with the children's intentions at heart. Children are able to talk about what acts of worship mean to them and they enjoy that 'special time' as the school comes together. Whilst collective worship is planned and evaluated the school needs to explore ways for the children to play a more active role in this. Prayer is an important feature of collective worship and this has had a positive impact on pupils' spiritual development. For example children have the freedom to choose who and what they pray for. Worship during the inspection enabled the children to reflect upon gifts they could send to others less fortunate than themselves. The children's ideas were based upon the value of love with one child suggesting they could put a mum and dad in a box for the children who have no one to love them. Children are aware of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in worship and they are able to talk about this with a degree of understanding. Singing also takes an important place in the school's worship – songs are chosen that are lively, uplifting but are relevant to the theme of the week or day. Ofsted (2014) commented on the excellent behaviour; children's engagement and the time spent thinking about different faith and cultures and how they can help others.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**

Preinspection evidence indicated that religious education is not treated simply as a discrete subject, but pervades many other areas of the curriculum. This judgement was confirmed during the inspection. Standards in RE are good overall. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultures and beliefs through the study of other faiths. Assessment and tracking are in their infancy which is an area the leadership team are keen to address. Differentiation is clear in RE although marking does not always state the next step for learning – curriculum coverage is good. During the inspection a lesson was observed that focused on the Nativity and the Birthday of Jesus. One child talked about light stopping them from being scared and how Jesus is a light who can help to do this too. The Headteacher leads RE and is passionate about the profile of the subject and the achievements of both staff and the children. As a result RE is a focus of the school development plan with a key point to involve governors more fully in the

monitoring and evaluation of the subject.

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

Distinctly Christian values are at the heart of all decision making and are reflected in the school's aims and ethos. The Headteacher and staff are working hard to uphold the Christian Vision and this is supported effectively by governors and parents. Christian values make a significant impact on the lives of the learners and the whole school community; everyone understands that they create the right environment for learning and growth.

The Headteacher, staff and governors have evaluated the school's Christian Ethos identifying areas for further development; there is good capacity for further improvements.

Parents speak highly of Whitley Chapel First School and feel it lies at the heart of their community. Relationships are clearly good and parents speak highly of the openness with which they are invited to be a part of their school. Parents are very supportive as typified by their wide-ranging involvement and support of school life. The school's website, documentation, signs and displays as well as the caring behaviour of both staff and pupils continually promote Christian values. The Head teacher, staff and governors provide excellent role models for learners. This has led to close family relationships which enrich the school, providing an excellent framework for support and pastoral care. Governors give much time and commitment as leaders of this church school and hold the Headteacher and staff to account. They are proactive in guiding and supporting the leaders in how to move the school forward.

SIAMS report December 2014 Whitley Chapel First School Northumberland NE470HB