



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Chester-le-Street Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Hilda Park
Chester le Street
DH2 2JT

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Durham

Dates of inspection: 8th July 2016

Date of last inspection: 7th July 2011

School's unique reference number: 114213

Headteacher: Jane Proud

Inspector's name and number: Richard Goodman

Quality assurance: Lyn Field 151

School context

Chester-le-Street Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School was established on 1st January 2015. This was following the closure of South Pelaw Infant School (a non-church school) and the extending of the age range of Chester-le-Street CE Junior School from 7-11 to 4-11 years. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with special education needs are above national averages. The school employs a teacher who has recently been ordained as a priest.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chester-le-Street Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- This is a loving school where both staff and pupils understand and live out the distinctive Christian values
- Inspirational leadership of collective worship has had a significantly positive impact on the whole school community
- The myriad of opportunities for prayer and reflection contribute immensely to the whole school community's spiritual development
- The headteacher has effectively guided the school on a smooth transition from two schools; this is now very much one distinctive church primary school

Areas to improve

- Establish a formal system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school as a church school in order to drive and sustain improvements
- Ensure that distinctly Christian values are made more explicit in all school documentation and policies so that it is clear how they shape the work of the school

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

This is a loving school where Christian values are clearly lived out throughout the school. All members of the school community have been on a shared journey to establish the Christian ethos through the transition to a new primary school. Pupils and staff have a clear understanding of the school's Christian values and can articulate how they impact on their lives. Pupils spoke candidly of how collective worship, religious education (RE) and reflection time helped them to learn about these values. They were able to explain how what they had learnt affected decisions linked to their daily life and achievement. The behaviour and relationships of pupils are of a high standard. Pupils and parents highlighted that the school's golden rule of 'treat others as you would like to be treated' (Luke 6:31) had created a culture of treating all people with respect. The buddying scheme used throughout the school helps to develop relationships between older and younger pupils, enhancing the confidence of all.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points. A culture has developed where every child feels valued and is seen as an individual child of God. The school sees potential in all children and varies its teaching approaches to focus on the strengths of each child. Parents talked of how teachers take time to get to know their children, 'knowing them inside-out'. They also highlighted how support staff are 'worth their weight in gold' as they spend time supporting and nurturing the children.

Collective worship provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Pupils learn about Christian values and Bible teachings linked to these. Through initiatives like 'Open the Book' pupils actively engage with Bible teachings and stories and speak enthusiastically about doing so. Events such as 'World Family Week' help pupils to develop an understanding of and respect for other faiths and cultures. Leaders of collective worship make the point of emphasising to pupils that there is a multi-faith and multi-cultural world outside of the school. This understanding is further developed through visits to different places of worship in the wider community.

The varied school curriculum and wealth of extra-curricular activities contribute well to the SMSC development of pupils. The school's Christian values are interwoven in the RE curriculum. As a result pupils develop a good understanding of Christianity and can speak about Bible teachings with confidence. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm of how they learnt about different faiths and cultures in their RE lessons. One pupil commented how this helped them to now understand stories they heard in the news.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The inspirational leadership of collective worship has led to it making a huge difference to the lives of pupils, staff and families. Pupils are highly engaged and enthused by collective worship; they talk with glee about worship that has left a lasting impression on them. Parents commented how their children talked at home about issues and teachings they learnt in worship. They wanted to say the school prayer before bedtime and discuss Bible stories. There are a myriad of opportunities for prayer and reflection, significantly contributing to the whole school community's spiritual development. Pupils have reflection time at the end of each day to consider what the Christian values mean to them. Pupils are eager to pray during collective worship. They volunteer and lead spontaneous prayers linked to themselves, their community and the wider world. This is aided through the lighting of three candles at the front of the school hall.

The collective worship leader has worked tirelessly to bring together a range of people including staff, governors and pupils, to plan, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of worship. This depth of monitoring within worship has led to significant improvement. The ordained member of staff has trained other staff helping to build their confidence in planning and delivering worship. Pupils themselves are also given significant opportunities to plan, lead and be involved in worship.

The Bible is central to collective worship and used extensively within it. Through initiatives such as 'Open the Book' pupils have developed a deep understanding of Jesus Christ and of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils talked with interest of the Bible stories they have engaged with including the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. They spoke confidently of the values of forgiveness and justice identified in these stories. Christian festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Harvest are celebrated throughout the year, developing pupils' understanding of Anglican traditions. Initiatives such as 'prayer spaces' are used to provide opportunities for the school community to understand and reflect on Christian festivals. Local clergy, parents and the wider community are invited in to share these experiences with the school, aiding the spiritual development of all.

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

There is an obvious 'loving leadership' emanating from the headteacher and deputy headteacher; they live out the school's Christian values. This has had a huge impact on pupils and staff, particularly with regards to the smooth transition to a church primary school. Staff felt valued in being involved in the formation of the new school's Christian ethos. There is very much a feeling that this school is now in every respect one school.

School leaders have a good understanding of pupils' achievement and progress. School improvement strategies clearly link to the areas in need of development and are having notable impact. Although Christian values are now embedded in practice across the school they are not made clear in school documentation and policies. The headteacher and governors have reflected on the focus for development from the previous report. The merger of the two schools was used as an opportunity to review the school mission statement. Staff and governors have worked together to identify core Christian values which will inform all aspects of school life. However, the headteacher drives much of the process of self-evaluation and formal systems for governors to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school as a church school are not sufficiently robust to sustain improvements.

The support of a teacher through ordination showed the foresight of the headteacher and governors in anticipating the value this investment would bring to the school. Governors and parents spoke of the joy the process of her ordination has brought to the school. Pupils have shared the journey with her, helping to deepen their understanding of Christian practices. Mutually beneficial links exist between the school and church. Clergy and parishioners regularly come into school to lead or take part in worship and to run lunch time prayer clubs. Pupils regularly visit the local church and engage in services and community-based activities. This all has a clear benefit for pupils, particularly in developing their understanding of the local community.

All staff and governors have been involved in training and professional development linked to the creation of the school's Christian ethos and values. Staff spoke about how they feel valued and empowered by the school leadership. The headteacher has created a supportive culture which has extended across the school. Staff are confident and appreciate the development opportunities they are given which benefit the children.

SIAMS report July 2016 Chester-le-Street CE VC Primary School Chester-le-Street DH2 2JT