

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Felton Church of England Controlled Primary School	
Mouldshaugh Lane, Felton, Morpeth, NE65 9PY	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Newcastle
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Northumberland
Date of inspection	16 March 2018
Date of last inspection	12 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	122273
Headteacher	Suzanne Connolly
Inspector's name and number	Alan Baker 903

School context

Felton Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School is a small, rural school which is currently transitioning from being a First school. Part of the Alnwick Partnership of schools, pupils mainly live locally in Felton, West Thirston and the surrounding villages. Pupil numbers have grown recently, by more than a quarter over the previous two years, with 86 currently on role. Cohort numbers vary dramatically from between 5 and 17. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below and those with special educational needs is in line with national average. All pupils at the school are of White British heritage.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Felton Church of England Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The school vision of 'loving, learning, living' is solidly underpinned by an impressively wide range of Christian values.
- The whole school community confidently articulates many Christian values which shape the positive attitude of learners.
- Leaders at all levels ensure that each pupil is of high priority and act decisively to meet their individual needs.
- Governors ably support and challenge the deeply committed headteacher in developing the Christian character of the school.
- Pupils enjoy and respond positively to a range of worship styles and leaders.
- Relationships and opportunities developed with the local church and community are of mutual benefit and appreciated for the positive impact they have on pupils.

Areas to improve

- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop their experience of diversity and other faiths and cultures so that they have a better understanding of their place in our multi-cultural society.
- Create additional, informal opportunities for pupils to reflect and pray as a form of spiritual support.
- Work to enable pupils to convey how specific Bible stories and parables might guide their actions.

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

The importance given by school leaders to each child, as a child of God, is vital in ensuring that all children achieve educationally and socially. Varied cohort sizes make trends in data hard to determine, but this is addressed effectively by in-depth and detailed tracking of each pupil. Staff know each child as an individual and this leads to good support for their academic progress and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. They are well aware of pupils whose progress is slower and offer them responsive and effective support. Adults are excellent role models and, through their interactions with all members of the community, live out the school's Christian values of peace, friendship, trust and forgiveness. Pupils behave well and are proud of their school, creating a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere. One pupil felt that, 'Even when we do naughty things, the teachers are still kind and care about us'. The love and support pupils and parents receive makes them feel valued and welcomed, leading to levels of attendance which are above national average. Christian values are of great importance and blend seamlessly with the school vision of 'loving, learning, living'. The 'tree of values' ensures that pupils' knowledge of Christian values is broad, allowing them and their parents to clearly articulate the impact they see on their lives. Combining them with their knowledge of 'cognitive learning animals', which have been introduced by the school, help pupils to see the values in action more simplistically. They understand the importance of values to Christians and those of other faiths and none. This is particularly evident in the opportunities pupils take to serve others. Drawing on the experiences of the school community, local resources and diocesan links allow pupils to participate in and organise events to support others in need, at home and abroad. One pupil shared the sacrifices they had been prepared to make in order to support a charity close to their heart. The positive attitudes of learners are obvious in their responses to lessons and school in general. A full and varied curriculum, with particular focus given to outdoor learning in God's natural world, help pupils to develop academically and spiritually. They are enthused by the opportunities to be creative and to share their understanding in practical ways. In addition, the use of 'Understanding Christianity' in religious education (RE) is beginning to make the subject more thought provoking and is offering new and varied learning opportunities. This sits neatly alongside well-planned worship, focused on values and the life and teachings of Jesus. Pupils share their knowledge and enjoyment of stories from the Bible but are less able to convey how specific Bible stories and parables might guide their actions. Leaders are very aware of the white British context of the school and have a growing focus to develop pupils' understanding of diversity within local, national and global communities. There are increased opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths but pupils struggle to show understanding of similarities and differences between religions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Great importance is given to collective worship and pupils enjoy the varying daily forms that it takes. They particularly enjoy the 'different feel' which smaller year group worship brings. As one pupil commented, 'I love coming together as a whole school but it feels special when we have worship in our classroom'. Staff see the benefit worship brings to relationships with and between pupils. One member of staff spoke of the 'openly spiritual conversations' which now take place with children in her care. The school draws well on links with the local churches to bring an impressive range of regular and occasional worship leaders from different denominations. Pupils speak positively about the different style and personality each leader brings, and this increases their enthusiasm and interest. The input of governors and local clergy in planning themes and delivery has led to a clear direction for worship, which links naturally with the school values and RE themes. Pupils know the importance of the Bible and understand it as the word of God. The life and teachings of Jesus, as a role model to Christians, are central to worship. There is also a growing understanding of the trinitarian nature of Christianity. Worship is distinctively Christian and pupils gain a full and varied experience of the Christian calendar. Some training has taken place to increase staff confidence when leading worship with large and small groups. Work is carried out by school leaders to monitor the quality of all worship and this is beginning to ensure that the majority of worship is of a high standard. Award worships are used to demonstrate how children use and benefit from the Christian values. Pupils are less confident when describing the impact of other biblical teachings which they hear of and the guidance this gives to their lives. Parents know that their pupils' behaviour and SMSC development is strong, due to the impact of being in a church school, but struggle to view worship as being a contributing factor to this. Prayer and reflection time, as part of worship, help pupils to deepen their understanding of theological topics and themes. Recent prayer spaces events have allowed pupils to begin accessing prayer and reflection outside of daily worship time. They enjoy the opportunity to be involved in prayer, but they are less understanding of the support this may give them and the purpose of prayer in the lives of Christians. Opportunities for pupils to be involved in the delivery of worship are growing and pupils are keen to use their enthusiasm to support and deliver more regularly.

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

Leaders of the school have a deep understanding of the community, its context and each individual that is part of it. They are able to clearly articulate the positive impact Christian distinctiveness has on the school's life and the way it has supported them through a time of transition to a two tier education system and recent growth of the school. Thorough and effective evaluation supports them in making decisions which are guided by a strong Christian vision to look after the whole child. Leaders are adamant that the deeply embedded values, which they model continuously, are not in place simply to benefit pupils' time at the school, but 'to help them deal with the challenges of life ahead'. Recent new governors, who now include two members of the clergy, ensure the Christian character of the school remains the priority when decisions are taken. Leaders convincingly describe Christianity as a 'driving force, not a bolt on' for the strong relationships in the school. A desire to create leadership at all levels has created an environment where staff feel supported by leaders who live out the values which are so important to them. They appreciate the support and opportunity to develop given to them by senior leaders who they say 'demonstrate 'loving, learning, living' in their every action'. All staff are being continuously developed as Church leaders of the future. The work carried out to embed Christian values in the life of the community has created a warm, loving school where pupils and their families, staff and community members benefit enormously from the care they are given. Parents are very supportive of the school and they appreciate the warm, inclusive and caring ethos, in which staff 'go the extra mile,' for children and families where 'everyone is known by name'. They clearly recognise the language of Christian values which pupils bring home, creating, as one parent commented, 'strong ethics and morals in the way my child thinks about others'. Children thrive on the creative learning opportunities on offer, particularly being outdoors and appreciating their environment. Leaders give this great importance and prominence, not only to develop a love of learning, but also a love of the environment which pupils enthuse about, summed up effectively by one child who felt that, 'When we're outside, we feel closer to God'. Importance has been given to RE and children enjoy the thought provoking lessons they now share. Worship and RE meet statutory requirements and school leaders are working continuously to review and develop the impact these have on learners. The healthy relationships which have been fostered with the local church ensure mutual benefits for all. Children love working with the church and the church, in turn, love being a living part of the school. Support from several local clergy and church representatives is strong. They bring a range of knowledge and skills which are used positively and sensitively to support the whole community, both educationally and pastorally. Parents like the opportunities these relationships bring for their children and are beginning to understand the benefit that Christian input can bring to their children's SMSC development.

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