

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Heddon-on-the-Wall St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Trajan Walk Heddon-on-the-Wall NE15 0BJ	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Newcastle
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Northumberland
Date of inspection	25 June 2017
Date of last inspection	27 June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled I22275
Headteacher	Andrew Wheatley
Inspector's name and number	Valerie Hall 859

School context

Heddon-on-the-Wall St. Andrew's is a smaller than average first school with 171 pupils, including nursery pupils. There are fewer than average numbers of pupils with SEN and those eligible for pupil premium. Attendance is good with no exclusions. The school is undergoing building work to convert to a primary school, to be complete in September 2017. There includes a planned pilot to provide 30 hours of free child care to eligible three year olds. There are close links with the local church and services are held in school. Neighbouring Albemarle Barracks lead to school having a number of forces pupils, varying by year group.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Heddon-on-the-Wall St. Andrew's Voluntary Controlled First School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school is deeply rooted in its local community and demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility towards it, springing from widely held Christian values.
- Children are safe and feel safe in this deeply caring school.
- Adults tell of the value of worship and how they have drawn support from it at times of difficulty or joy.
- Relationships with Albemarle Barracks offer a unique insight into how prayer can be used to support families and pupils. The Padre leads worship in school.
- Staff talk about church and community as being an extended family. This is strongly promoted by clergy.
- Where bullying occurs, pupils speak with conviction about how adults help them.
- Adults speak of how prayer and reflection has helped during recent discussions about structural change.
- Leaders are keen that pupils expand their horizons and understand the wider world including other faiths and cultures. They are unstinting in their efforts to do so.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that Christian character remains clearly understood as new staff are recruited and school moves forward and expands
- Ensure that leadership of worship is promoted and developed so that more adults grow in confidence and can lead to current high standards.

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

Pupils achieve well in this caring school. Validated data indicates that attainment is above national averages and attendance is good. There are fewer than average numbers of pupils eligible for pupil premium grant and they achieve well. The head teacher attributes this to very high levels of ambition held at all levels for pupils. Constant reflection on what the Bible says about learning and self-improvement mean that everything pupils strive for leads back to scripture. Where the school identifies areas for improvement, leaders ensure robust action is taken. This is evident in improvements in tracking and marking of pupils work. A well thought out curriculum promotes spirituality which is evident throughout school. Children contribute to display and art work which helps them use all their senses to celebrate meaningful Christian learning. Joyful use of music also enhances children's ability to express their growing faith. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural learning enhances the Christian character of the school by helping pupils and adults to reach out into their local and world community in a wide number of ways, such as through the Comenius projects they have undertaken. Children can talk in depth about other faiths, such as Judaism, and other cultures with a profound understanding. There is a well-developed Holocaust memorial garden which children and adults talk about with great respect. The school has a strong understanding of the need for Christian responsibility to its wider community. Schools actions, which follow its conviction, are well rooted in biblical teaching and are central to the mission of the school. Links to local Albemarle Barracks help pupils understand life in other parts of the world, and pupils demonstrate impressive empathy towards others. Respect for the wider Christian community is also well embedded. Pupils support a child in Bethlehem and have a good understanding of his life and culture. Pupils and leaders all reap ample reward from their understanding of the wider world and diverse communities. Evidence from scrap books shows that RE is well-taught and clearly indicates that pupils are encouraged to express their views. RE underpins the values held by all and teaching is used to reinforce values and its stewardship responsibilities. Relationships within school and with the wider community are rooted in the same sense of Christian mission and responsibility. Behaviour in and around the school is exemplary and children show compassion for one another in their actions in lessons, breakfast club and playtimes, with older pupils frequently supporting younger ones. There are very few examples of poor behaviour which indicates that teaching about behaviour and conduct are outstanding. Pupils help one another and empathise when issues arise. Parents speak highly of school and the values that are expressed. Mutually beneficial relationships with the local church enhance values and worship within school and beyond. It is these values that have helped school navigate recent expansion discussions and structural changes that will affect the community. Leaders have a strong sense of purpose and state clearly that Christian character underpins this.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is impressive and inspiring. Children respond with joy and enthusiasm, to a wide variety of music, reflection, prayer and story. They interact with adults in a mature manner, drawing meaning from their learning. Worship engages adults and learners and they talk in detail about how it affects them now and in times of challenge. Widely articulated values, demonstrated throughout school, underpin worship and detailed display helps children relate daily action to biblical teaching. Social responsibility, rooted in prayer, exemplifies the school's Christian ethos with worship evaluation supporting this view. Moral teaching plays a large part in worship. The use of candles in worship draws pupils and adults attention to the centrality of the Trinity and the use of liturgical colours embeds worship in Anglican tradition. Everyone in school talks with passion about the centrality of worship, including governors and parents. This includes those relatively new to faith. Adults have the opportunity to develop personal spirituality as the vicar leads worship for adults in church and school. Staff have increasingly engaged with worship in the local church as a result of the embedded prayer life in school. As a result, staff have felt motivated to increase prayer opportunities for pupils, such as Fish Club, which is light hearted and great fun but also well rooted in Christian charity and stewardship. Worship is planned on an annual cycle. Pupils attend church at least five times a year and are involved in planning and leading. There a number of innovations, such as an introduction to worship for new starters and their parents, clearly setting out Christian ethos and values, for those new to school. Pupils are involved in planning and leading this. There are opportunities for spontaneous prayer in class and informally. Children write prayers of their own volition, which are taken into church and blessed. Children highly value this as it contributes to a sense of involvement in the wider Christian family. Evaluation of worship is clear, which leads to improvement, and leaders are not complacent. They are ambitious for the life of school, including its prayer life and are planning to ensure high standards are maintained. Leaders state that they are planning for succession in worship leading. Leaders state that 'Prayer is at the centre of our understanding of our lives.'

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

The head teacher shows impressive leadership of the school as a church school and makes every effort to ensure its Christian character gleams through, in everything it undertakes. Children and families speak of how they are inspired by this and how it affects life outside school. Standards are in line with or above national standards and progress is good. Improvements have been made since the last OFSTED and SIAMS and ambition for pupils is high, showing that leaders take their role very seriously. Evaluation of the school as a church school is strong and leaders can articulate where improvements have taken place. Leaders express the need for pupils to expand their horizons and take advantage of opportunities offered to them. They ensure the curriculum is rich, engaging and relevant to the lives of learners, which gives them a wider world view. Before and after school care also reflects Christian values and the strong ethos of the school, which is deeply respected by all. As the school expands, leaders are actively recruiting staff who will support the values and ethos of school. They have also ensured that leaders take part in development opportunities to support the leadership of other church schools. Governors have also taken part in learning which helps them direct the work of school clearly and help it to develop a robust sense of its own spirituality and character. They have learned how to evaluate performance and how to hold others to account for progress in all matters. Leaders are clear about their purpose in school improvement and what their expectations of pupils are. Partnerships with the local church are outstanding and a strength of the school. Children know what is expected of them in school and in the wider world. As a result, behaviour and conduct are exemplary, with adults noting that children behave in the same way in school and out. The local church supports worship in school and beyond, but also enables the school to reach out into the wider community. This is widely respected by parents who speak highly of the involvement between the two. Parents' response to acts of worship show in their commitment to attendance at events, which is very high. Adults speak movingly of how the school has helped them in very difficult times and shared their joys. Care for the individual clearly abounds and pastoral care is seen as a priority for adults and children. This was evident in engaging but sensitive worship which dealt with feelings of isolation and difference. Children understood and could articulate the message to a very high standard and this reflects the impact of the Christian foundations of the school.

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