

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Holy Trinity Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Crawford Street

Seaton Carew

Hartlepool

TS25 1BZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Hartlepool

Dates of inspection: 28 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 9-10 February 2010

School's unique reference number: 111699

Headteacher: Amanda Baines

Inspector's name and number: Canon Brian Hedley NS619

School context

The school is continually oversubscribed. It is average in size. The proportion of pupils with special education needs, English as a second language, and those for whom the school receives extra funding, are below average. In September this year provision was extended to include a 26 place nursery. A new school is currently being built on site. Recent changes to the staffing structure have led to eight new appointments including an assistant head teacher and a leader for RE and Worship. The school was awarded Teaching School status in 2011 and is part of the Hartlepool Teaching School Alliance.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holy Trinity as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values at the heart of school life shape, support and sustain achievement at every level
- Strong, insightful and effective leadership guarantees that 'all pupils can achieve their fullest potential in all aspects of their learning'
- The outstanding provision made for the professional development and well-being of all staff results in the exceptional care of pupils who, as a consequence, achieve highly
- Creative and challenging worship and religious education (RE), times of reflection and prayer, and the very successful one-to-one mentoring programme underpin the spiritual and emotional well-being of learners exceptionally well
- The spiritual life of the school is greatly enhanced by the ministry of the parish priest
- The passionate commitment of governors towards the school's distinctively Christian vision positively impacts on their decision-making and plans for the future

Areas to improve

- Establish a 'governors' ethos committee' to extend the evaluation mechanism for assessing more fully the effectiveness of the school as a Church school
- Formalise arrangements for the induction of new staff so that Christian ethos and its relationship to raising achievement is kept high on the school's agenda

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

Holy Trinity has a clear and embedded Christian ethos which forms the bedrock of its decision-making and priorities for the future. Core Christian values are lived out day-by-day and this creates an atmosphere which enables all learners to achieve highly. Parents confirmed this, saying, 'the school does all it can to give our children the best possible start in life and a grounding in good values' and again that, 'our children are taught very well and are cared for'. The curriculum is strong and vibrant; it is constantly being reviewed to ensure that only outstanding opportunities are offered to learners. This applies equally well to the extensive extra-curricular programme which seeks to meet the interests of as many children as possible. Despite serving an area where levels of deprivation are well below national norms, there is a strong commitment towards meeting the needs of any who are vulnerable. The sensitive and very successful mentoring programme helps learners experiencing a wide range of challenges associated with relationships, concentration, personal organisation, bereavement and low self-esteem, to make the most of the many learning opportunities and challenges presented to them. There are several examples of pupils and adults who have flourished within this environment of loving concern and effective support. One child explained that, adults help you to develop an 'I can do' attitude, and parents said, 'there's lots of flexibility when things go wrong; the school really cares and is really supportive and wants to help you sort things'. At the centre of the school's relationships is the commandment to, 'Love God and love your neighbour as yourself'. Pupils are able link this to their behaviour, which is outstanding, and the choices they make in life. They speak of having to look after others' needs both in school and further afield. This is well illustrated by their charitable giving and generous response through the service they offer. Holy Trinity is not a Christian bubble; it encourages and supports good citizenship, not just within the local, but also regional and global communities. Religious Education (RE) contributes hugely towards the Christian character of the school. It is not only helping pupils to unpick the school's own values but is constantly challenging their thinking about diversity and difference, both within the church and in different faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school meets for worship daily. Over time pupils experience a wide variety of approaches. Thorough planning and well thought-out presentation (which involves learners at every stage) ensures that it meets the needs of all; it is always distinctly Christian in nature. Worship really matters here. One of the children said enthusiastically, 'You must come! Worship is more important than a cup of tea', and another explained that, 'worship always gives us new things to think about or something we need to do'. These comments are echoed by statements written by every child on leaves forming a worship tree in the hall and in the Books of Reflection.

The close relationship with the local Anglican church, together with the regular presence and unequivocal support of the vicar, means that learners and their families have many enriching opportunities to engage in high-quality experiences which contribute to their personal spiritual development and well-being. Parents praised the relationship between parish and school, saying that, 'we get a great welcome when we go over to the church.' There was also appreciation of the re-designed bi-weekly Eucharist because adults attending felt that the service showed care for the spirituality of the child and for their family members also. Christian festivals are celebrated throughout the year and pupils explained how this helps them to understand the significance of Jesus and God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Children are clear about the significance of prayer (reflected in the class-written prayer books), and welcomed the reflection spaces in every classroom. The recently appointed worship co-ordinator works fastidiously to evaluate the effectiveness of the current programme. He is open to making adjustments where necessary. This process would be supported and facilitated admirably by a newly-created 'governors' ethos group' who could share analysis and action planning as part of the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of their worship policy.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education (RE) is based on the new diocesan syllabus and is superbly led and managed by an enthusiastic and able co-ordinator; staff are enthused by his confidence. He is constantly seeking ways to improve the curriculum and as a result, he is already reflecting on how units of work can be tailored to meet the local needs of the school community.

RE helpfully anchors the roots of the school's values, underpinning the principles of love, family, community, commitment, service, trust and respect. It contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This translates into excellent relationships across the school and beyond, but also helps learners develop and grow an understanding of the Christian faith and the integral part it can play in life and learning.

Standards in RE are excellent; the school's assessment profile shows that many learners are now achieving above national expectations in the subject; this is a growing trend over time.

The quality of teaching and learning are outstanding: lessons are meticulously planned to cater for the needs of every learner. On the day of inspection high levels of engagement were evident in all lessons observed because enthusiastic, skilful teaching drew learners into deeper levels of thinking and response. Home-made RE thinking frames are an outstanding resource. Pupils' work is closely monitored in order to ensure that appropriate standards are being met. Analysis of assessment and its relationship to achievement has resulted in a decision to refine further, written feedback to all learners, in line with that recently trialled in Year 6. This is a commendable step and will result in tighter evidence of progress when reporting to governors.

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

The Headteacher is unremitting in her conviction that the Christian ethos of the school must always have a positive impact on the achievement and well-being of its learners and on the community it serves. Her shared vision, inspirational leadership and constant drive for excellence galvanises the whole team. This leads to a wholehearted, enthusiastic commitment from everyone. Several staff members talked about the exceptional way in which they were given opportunities for their own development to build self-confidence, and heighten their impact when helping pupils to overcome barriers to learning not necessarily thrown up by data. The senior team talked openly about their concern for and responsibility towards newly appointed staff and a desire to ensure that they were well-supported and encouraged at every step, especially in grasping the significance of Christian ethos and its relationship to personal growth and learning; this would perhaps benefit from more formal, in-built arrangements. Governors have a range of complementary skills and are an essential part of the leadership team. Minutes of meetings and discussions with them confirm their ability to support and challenge but also that they are tenacious in ensuring that decisions will only be taken if the outcome will make a positive difference for children. Records of their many and varied visits, e-mailed copies of subject leaders reports prior to discussion at governors' meetings and first-hand conversations with learners all form integral elements in the governors toolbox for successful strategic planning and evaluation of the schools effectiveness.

The governing body and staff make excellent links with parents and carers. One parent said, 'we are always welcome; they keep us well informed and are really helpful in any situation'. Another explained that, 'teachers know us by name too, and if you have a problem you know to ask', and another, 'whatever your personal circumstances, everyone is family here'. Another great strength of the school is the effective and strong partnership it has with the local church. This enables both partners to serve their locality exceptionally well. The vicar is well-regarded for his wise counsel and pastoral care of staff and community members alike; many gave testimony to his unstinting prayerful support and encouragement throughout the year and most especially at times of difficulty, distress or bereavement.