

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Archbishop Runcie Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Christon Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1US

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Newcastle

Previous SIAMS inspection grade:

Outstanding

Local authority

Newcastle

Name of federation

Gosforth Schools Trust

Date of inspection

9th March 2017

Date of last inspection

23rd February 2012

School's unique reference number

108495

Headteacher

Canon Julie Robinson

Inspector's name and number

Valerie Hall 859

School context

Archbishop Runcie Church of England First school is a smaller than average school and has lower than national averages of pupils eligible for addition funding in all categories. The school is part of the federation of Gosforth Schools and part of Gosforth schools trust. It has strong and effective links to two churches, St Nicholas' Parish Church and All Saints Church. The school is entering a period of change as the current long serving head teacher will retire in 2017. There is a new chair of the governing body and governors are actively recruiting a new head teacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Archbishop Runcie Church of England First school as a Church of England school are good.

- The school is deeply rooted in its local community and draws on that commitment to provide a strong Christian environment within which all can thrive. It is an inclusive school where all are valued.
- This is a safe, caring and welcoming school with clear values, rooted in the church communities from which it springs.
- Children speak about their school with great pride and say it teaches them respect and love for each other and the world.
- Worship underpins the life of this school and spills out into the wider community. It is highly valued by everyone. Children have a rich variety of worship styles to experience and draw from as there are clear links with its two churches.
- Strong relationships abound, which have been developed over a long period, allowing leaders to work within a trusting and open framework, for the good of the whole community.
- Parents feel that as school enters a period of change, they are in safe hands.

Areas to improve

- Improve children's knowledge of Christianity as a world faith so that they increase their understanding of diversity.
- Increase strategic worship evaluation so that it leads to improvements in provision and enhances the confidence of new leaders.
- Develop a children's worship council in order to help children begin to have opportunities to lead and evaluate worship frequently and become confident in planning their own worship.
- Embed the assessment process in RE to enable children to make consistently outstanding progress.

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

The mission statement says 'Each of us is unique, special and loved by God and through his love we try to be the best that we can be' It is lived out in this deeply loving school where children feel safe and cared for. It is demonstrated in its care for children with special educational needs, for whom provision is particularly strong.

Pupils have well planned support and stakeholders talk about their social and emotional improvement. One parent described the experience of her child as the family encountered difficulties. Her child was able to thrive as a result of the care and attention given to emotional and academic achievement.

Outcomes this year have dipped against national outcomes and governors are aware. They have made robust plans for improvement. School attendance is line with national averages and there are no exclusions. Governors clearly link this to the ethos and that children enjoy being at school. Pupils talk about the impact religious education has on them and their lives. Lesson observations indicate clear biblical links, which the children enjoy. The children are very aware that they have more than others and appreciate what they have. One child stated 'there isn't a day goes by when we don't appreciate the things we have in this school'.

Behaviour is of a high standard and where issues arise, children are confident that adults will address them.

Children recognise diversity in their own community and value it. They like the fact that there are children from a range of faiths and of no faith because they say it makes their school more interesting. They enjoy the differences other faiths and beliefs bring to their school.

They can talk about other faith groups in the local community outside school but do not yet have a clear enough understanding of Christianity as a world faith. Although children clearly enjoy a varied diet of worship styles, led by the head teacher, deputy and local clergy, they do not yet take part in leading and developing aspects of worship themselves. Teachers lead occasional class worship. As such, children do not yet engage in frequent opportunities to talk about their own developing spirituality, other than in focussed Religious Education (RE) lessons. Adults enjoy worship and are uplifted by it. Children are aware of their wider community and what they can contribute to it. They support a wide range of local charities such as the People's Kitchen, St Nicholas' foodbank, St Oswald's hospice and the Daft as a Brush charity, linked to a cancer care charity. They have engaged in social enterprise by being involved in an initiative to make £5 grow. All these initiatives help children to appreciate that they have social responsibility, which is based in Christian mission to others. Children have broad social moral spiritual and cultural experiences from which to draw and can talk convincingly about how their rich experiences help them understand how the world works.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is highly valued in the life of the school. The whole community can express the value of it and children in particular do this. They express with great emotion how it can help them at difficult times in their lives. One child spoke movingly about how it helped because a parent was living away from the family home and prayer created a closeness that was much needed. Children can talk about how they pray privately when they are not in school and parents describe how children talk about prayer at school. This in turn influences families and creates a dialogue between home and school, strengthening relationships. The head teacher and clergy work together to ensure worship themes are relevant to the lives of children and reflect the Anglican calendar and traditions. Children and adults regard singing as an act of worship and abundant display of lines of much loved worship songs help children and adults make links between prayer, music and collective worship. Local clergy make very good use of role play and humour to engage children in worship.

Children are seen to be highly engaged and entertained by bible stories, very well illustrated by props, with children as helpers. Acts of worship help them understand how the teachings of Jesus can support in their everyday lives. Throughout school pupils are helped to understand about the person of Jesus through display, teaching and adult example. Teachers model their behaviour on the example of Jesus in their lives and talk convincingly about it. Children also see the more reflective side of worship however, and recognise that worship can help them think about what is important in life. They know that God can be an inspiration and a guide. Children describe how they pray before lunch and at home time and they clearly enjoy it. Children appreciate what the school has to offer and they speak of the value of humility and can describe how it helps them in RE. Adults can clearly articulate how they want children to be resilient and to understand that life is not always straightforward. They are working to ensure that children are able to rely on a rich prayer life to support them in the future. Worship enhances the lives of staff and staff room display indicates that opportunities are provided for them to celebrate aspects of each other's lives.

Governing body meetings include prayer and governors attend worship events at key points in the year. Worship is evaluated by school and governors have a clear view of its value, however, they do not yet formally evaluate or plan for strategic development in worship. Children do not yet plan, participate in or develop acts of worship on a regular basis.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The teaching of RE is given priority and children make good progress. The curriculum is effective as it is varied and opportunities are provided for children to discuss and debate their faith and experiences. A number of children bring experiences of other cultures which are valued and celebrated. Standards in RE are in line with standards in other subjects. Feedback to pupils shows that the subject is treated equally to other core subjects. RE makes links to spiritual teaching and children often make links and apply lessons to their own lives. They tell of how they use lessons learned to help when behaviour issues occur, such as a recent incident of bullying. Pupils use lessons learned in RE to help them understand the behaviour of others. Forgiveness is important in this caring school. The school uses the Newcastle syllabus and they have invested in high quality professional development to ensure teachers understand the assessment process. Local clergy have also provided support with theological aspects of RE teaching which teachers say has increased their confidence. The head teacher is the leader of RE and has very good subject knowledge. She leads teachers well in promoting the subject through outstanding display and links to worship and the wider curriculum. Children respond well in lessons and clearly value the subject. Teaching is consistently good, with some aspects of outstanding teaching. Children show good involvement in a variety of lessons, which includes enquiry based learning, sharing of ideas and aspects of reflection, particularly in Godly play. Through exciting RE lessons, children are taught to understand that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They also understand the person of Jesus Christ and recognise His unique qualities. There was evidence of strong planning and challenge. Governors have evaluated RE informally by observing lessons, with support from the subject leader and they have undertaken book scrutiny. They have a clear and accurate view of standards and assessment methodology. RE is part of whole school strategic planning and is included in the school development plan. Standards have begun to improve as a result of this concerted effort. School is now focussing on embedding assessment procedures so pupils can make outstanding progress from their starting points. Marking in books is diligent and accurate and teachers mark in line with other core subjects. Scrap books show the breadth of the curriculum and in some instances show the comments that children make about spirituality. Teachers recognise that RE provides opportunities for all children to do well because of its structure and purpose. They are given every chance to do so. Governors have begun to consider succession planning for RE and have clear plans for recruitment.

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

Mutual respect is an outstanding feature of this school, as a church school. Although standards have dipped in the last year, leaders understand why and have robust plans to ensure a return to previous high standards in the future. They confidently articulate distinct Christian values rooted in their trust document, which is a long standing element that drives the work of school and parish together. Policies and practice are informed by Christian values which are clearly described on the schools website.

Leaders have a clear view of the schools performance, including its academic outcomes and are responding to robust challenge in order to improve standards. They are ensuring that rapid improvement can take place. School attributes the application of clear Christian values to this improvement and they recognise pupils need. Honesty and humility have played a great part in the recognition of the need for development. Evidence supports this view and teachers talk about how they have felt supported by governors. Governors speak of their great respect for teaching staff and their willingness to embrace change so that pupils have the best possible chance to succeed. Governors and school leaders have worked together to understand what to do next. Curriculum and assessment developments are enhanced by Christian values which drive improvement. Arrangements for Religious Education and worship meet statutory requirements. Teachers talk about how their love for their pupils drives their desire for success for all reflecting the mission statement. School is moving into a period of change and plans are in place for the current head teacher's retirement in Summer 2017. School leaders recognise the importance of working together so that school does not lose pace and improvements made are not lost. However, they are all keen to acknowledge the contribution of the present head teacher to the success that the school currently enjoys. Governors have planned a period of visioning so that they can move forward with the new head teacher and be clear about how they will meet the needs of children and their families in coming years. Governors and parish representatives have carefully considered the future leadership of the school as a church school and have very clear views about how they want to recruit the right person. They want to ensure the strong Christian character of school is maintained by a head

who understands the Christian faith. The current head teacher leads worship and RE but governors have clear views about leadership of these areas and are keen to enhance the skills of existing staff, so that they are well placed to lead in the future. There is evidence in the application pack about their clarity of thought. The schools relationships with the wider church community are very highly developed. They have outstanding links with two parish churches, All Saints Church and St Nicholas Parish Church, who have an influential voice on the governing body, which greatly enhances the leadership of the school as a church school. Parents and other leaders speak clearly about how they value these relationships and feel they enhance school, with wider experiences of prayer, worship and RE teaching. Children and parents feel part of wider, loving community. Leaders feel both churches are different but bring a wealth of gifts to the school, which results in children being well rooted in a strong community. Governors recognise the need for deeper evaluation of schools performance and worship provision and have plans to do so. The newly appointed chair is taking every opportunity to spend time in school and has the determination and skills necessary to lead the school into the next phase of its development. Parents and teaching staff trust all leaders to maintain standards during this period, describing them as a 'safe pair of hands.' Love abounds here.

SIAMS report March 2017 Archbishop Runcie Church of England VA First School NE3 IUS