

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Ward Jackson Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Clark Street, Hartlepool, TS24 7LE

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Durham

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Hartlepool

Date of inspection

11 December 2017

Date of last inspection

5 December 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

Primary 136943

Headteacher

David Akers

Inspector's name and number

Geraldine Cooper 696

School context

Ward Jackson CE VA Primary school is a smaller than average primary school of 137 pupils serving a deprived area of central Hartlepool. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is below national average but this is increasing due to the changing demography of the area. The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium is higher than the national average but not all families eligible for free school meals apply. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is significantly above national average and is increasing. Pupil mobility is very high. The school became a church school in 2011. There has been a very significant change in leadership and staffing since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher has been in post as acting headteacher since September 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ward Jackson CE VA Primary school as a Church of England school are good.

- The Christian ethos and values of the school are explicit and fundamental in the creation of a nurturing environment which is inclusive of all pupils and their families.
- School leaders have a very strong understanding of, and commitment to, the importance of the school's distinctiveness in developing pupils' aspiration and attainment.
- Collective worship is of a very high standard and provides all members of the school community with the opportunity to experience an encounter with God.
- Religious education (RE) and collective worship play a complementary role in developing pupils' understanding and application of the school's Christian values.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that staff have a consistent understanding of how spirituality can be addressed across all curriculum areas in order to provide more opportunities for pupils' spiritual development.
- Extend the range of opportunities for pupils to meet with Christians from other traditions and cultures so that they are able to develop a deeper understanding of Christianity as a diverse world faith.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the Holy Spirit so that they are more able to talk about the Trinitarian nature of God.
- Ensure that there is a systematic study of faiths other than Christianity so that children develop a knowledge and understanding of the diversity of faiths in their own, and the wider community,

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

The school's core Christian values of respect, courage, kindness, truthfulness and compassion are explicitly stated and consistently reinforced. All members of the school community have a shared understanding and appreciation of their significance. Staff consistently model these values through their own behaviour and this has a positive impact on the way in which pupils interact confidently with staff and with their peers. This extends to new members of the school, particularly from refugee and migrant families. They are welcomed and quickly adopted into the school community where their contribution is welcomed.

There are high levels of mobility and a large proportion of the pupils have special educational needs which are met through well focussed educational and emotional support. This is recognised by parents and carers who appreciate the commitment that the school demonstrates when dealing with patterns of challenging behaviour. The school's values are referenced in policy documents and it is evident that these values inform the inclusive way in which all pupils, particularly those that are vulnerable, are supported. Although attainment is below national average the gap is narrowing. The newly established staff team are clearly motivated to work alongside school leaders to ensure that pupils have access to high levels of challenge and expectation.

Resources are deployed effectively to create a stimulating learning environment in which pupils feel that they are valued. Staff work hard to achieve a nurturing, family atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and make progress from significantly lower than average starting points in their early years. They benefit from an interesting and thought-provoking curriculum which offers a range of enrichment opportunities. As a consequence of this pupils are developing higher levels of self-esteem and confidence which is beginning to be apparent in the quality of their work. They demonstrate the self-discipline and motivation to sustain learning and to work collaboratively.

The school's values, coupled with an emphasis on the fruits of the spirit, provide an effective foundation for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. They appreciate that these help them to differentiate between right and wrong and to develop the characteristics of a 'good person'. They recognise this as being rooted in the teachings and actions of Jesus and describe themselves as 'making better choices because Jesus is beside me'. However, pupils have a very traditional idea of Jesus and would benefit from a greater appreciation of Christianity as a diverse world faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

The headteacher's considerable experience of planning and leading worship is evident in the priority that the school places on effective worship. He has created a model of policy and practice which has been shared with all colleagues in order that pupils benefit from worship which is consistently meaningful. All members of the teaching staff attend collective worship. They agree that this has added to their understanding, and appreciation, of the school's distinctively Christian ethos which they are able to share with pupils.

Collective worship is carefully planned to ensure that the school values are explicitly linked to Bible stories and Christian teaching. As a consequence of this, pupils are familiar with a wide range of Bible stories and they are able to make links between these and the choices that they make. Pupils have enthusiastically engaged in the Archbishop of York's 'Advent challenge' and have demonstrated their kindness and compassion through the sacrifices that they have made. There is a strong focus on the fruits of the spirit and pupils are rewarded for behaviour which exemplifies these. This recognition is highly valued and is described as having a significant impact on behaviour and relationships.

The headteacher has established a clear structure for collective worship which provides a coherent focus for pupils to deepen their understanding of the school's values. Contemporary worship music is used with great effect to create an atmosphere in which pupils have the opportunity to 'meet with God'. It is evident from the way that pupils respond, through music and prayer, that they are fully engaged in worship. They describe this as a 'special time' but do not yet have the vocabulary to describe it as 'spiritual'.

Worship is planned to ensure that each week starts with a clear focus, rooted within the school's values. Throughout the week, pupils use a display board to record their ideas and responses as the theme is developed by each worship leader. This informs the evaluation and development of worship through the week and is shared with parents in collective worship on a Friday.

The school is home to Burbank Community Church and has close links with the local church where pupils take an active role in the celebration of key Christian festivals. These are well attended by parents. Pupils on the worship committee have deepened their understanding of Christian worship by working with the parish priest to develop a school Eucharist. This service is well attended by parents and contributes to the outreach of the Church.

Pupils are introduced to simple structured prayers as they enter Nursery and this is developed throughout their school life. An interactive prayer day has equipped pupils to make effective use of the reflection areas that have been established in each classroom. Pupils are comfortable in talking about how prayer helps them to deal with their

feelings. Teachers observe that this enhances pupils' emotional resilience and their capacity to concentrate and, therefore, to learn.

Pupils are happy to talk about God and Jesus and have a clear knowledge of Jesus' life and teaching but they have not yet developed the confidence to explore, or articulate, an understanding of the Holy Trinity.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

RE has a high profile within the school and is currently led by the headteacher who regularly monitors teaching and learning through observation and work scrutiny. Pupil progress is measured against the learning outcomes of the diocesan syllabus. These are tracked on a regular basis and indicate that pupil progress is in line with national expectation. Pupils are introduced to RE from entry into nursery where attractive resources engage them in learning about Christianity. From an early age, pupils can recount the life of Jesus and simple Bible stories. As they progress through school, pupils benefit from well-structured and carefully differentiated lessons which complement collective worship to promote SMSC development. They use an increasingly wide range of Bible stories to explain the school's Christian values and how these impact on moral choices.

The school has addressed the areas for development in the previous inspection report and has worked closely with the diocesan education team and neighbouring schools to promote a high standard of teaching and learning in RE. It is evident that teachers deploy a variety of strategies to enhance pupils' capacity to engage in dialogue and develop critical thinking skills. Learning uses and enhances skills developed in other areas of the curriculum and provides rigour and challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able. This was particularly evident in the detailed textual analysis being carried out by year 6 pupils as they explored the role of John the Baptist. Learning is well documented in class journals and in pupil books and it is evident that pupils take pride in their work. They make links between learning and their own experience and are confident in sharing ideas. Pupils appreciate RE as a way of finding out more about God and the Bible. They think that it is important to learn about other faiths 'so that people can get on with each other' but would benefit from a more systematic study of major world faiths.

School leaders ensure that all pupils receive their statutory entitlement to religious education and have taken advantage of diocesan training in to implement a new and more rigorous RE curriculum. However, this is at an early stage and has yet to be fully embedded.

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good.

Since the last inspection there has been a significant change in school leadership and staffing. A new governing body has recently been appointed with the local incumbent as Chair, thus ensuring a high level of focus on the school's Christian distinctiveness. Governors have identified the necessary skills and experience that the school needs to provide a high quality of education within a deprived community and have made appointments accordingly. The previous deputy headteacher has been appointed as acting headteacher. His leadership combines knowledge of the school and community with innovation rooted in the school's Christian character. He has established a new leadership team which, along with the governing body, endorses his affirmation of the school's distinctiveness as a church school. Together they see the school's Christian ethos and values as crucial in creating an environment in which pupils are encouraged to aspire and be equipped for academic success. Teachers, the majority of whom are new to the school, and support staff, are motivated by the challenge that this brings and have a deep appreciation of the Christian context in which they work. This is apparent in their high level of dedication to creating an environment which successfully fosters positive learning behaviour amongst the pupils.

The leadership team is now able to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's distinctively Christian ethos. They have made pupil attainment a priority and have introduced more rigorous procedures to monitor progress. Regular assessment tasks are used by leaders to measure pupil progress against national figures. This information is used to ensure that support is targeted effectively. Special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision has been re-organised and refocussed to ensure that all vulnerable pupils receive the level of emotional and academic support that they require. The impact of this is seen in the maintenance of a calm and purposeful environment in which all children can learn. Pupils respond positively to the high expectations that have been established with regard to behaviour and academic standards.

The acting headteacher's personal experience of the church school leaders' programme has informed the way that he has addressed professional development of staff and governors. Development days have focussed on the way in which the school's Christian character impacts on behaviour and learning. As a consequence of this, staff have a deeper understanding of the distinctiveness of Church schools. Leaders work collaboratively with a range of organisations, including the local authority and the diocese, to ensure that all members of staff are equipped to meet the needs of the pupils.