

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Morpeth All Saints Church of England Aided First School

Pinewood Drive  
Lancaster Park  
Morpeth  
NE61 3RD

<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Newcastle</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Northumberland
Date of inspection	13 February 2017
Date of last inspection	25 January 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	First School 122297
Headteacher	Kathleen Halliday
Inspector's name and number	The Revd Canon Steven Harvey 891

#### School context

Morpeth All Saints Church of England Aided First School is a small first school located on a residential estate, although increasing numbers are enrolling from surrounding villages. There are 189 pupils on roll, which is a significant increase from the last SIAS inspection, when there were 145 pupils. The majority of pupils join the school from the school's own nursery unit. Over 90% of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs, are both below the national average. Since the last SIAS inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Morpeth All Saints Church of England First School as a Church of England school are good

- A distinctively Christian vision and set of core values are deeply embedded in the school and permeate its daily life and work. This vision is articulated and promoted by the headteacher and deputy headteacher with conviction and enthusiasm.
- Pupils, parents and staff recognise and greatly value the impact which the school's Christian character has on the life of the whole school community.
- Collective worship has a high profile in the school. The school community places great value on collective worship and on the impact it has on the community's life and work.

#### Areas to improve

- Establish procedures for governors to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's distinctive Christian vision and values, in order for these to be used to inform strategic planning to drive improvement.
- In religious education (RE), ensure that the new assessment system is firmly embedded so that it can be used effectively in the monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning, in development planning, and in the raising of attainment.

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

The school's Christian vision and core values are displayed prominently throughout the school and are deeply embedded in its life and work. The vision statement, 'Learning together with love and laughter', determines the school's engagement with all of its pupils. Statements such as 'You are God's work of art' greet everyone in the entrance area and are reflected very positively in relationships throughout the school community. Pupils relate their views of the school directly to the fact that they attend a church school which has Christian values at its heart. One pupil spoke of love as the 'most special' of the school's Christian values, 'because God loves us'. Pupils recognise the impact of the school's Christian character on their lives and express this with enthusiasm and conviction. In a discussion with pupils, comments such as 'this is a kind and caring place' were well supported. Behaviour is excellent, and relationships are caring and supportive. Pupils expressed pride that their school's Anti-Bullying Week is called Friendship Week. Pupils feel very safe. They value the worry boxes in each classroom, know who to turn to if they have a problem, and are confident that the problem will be addressed and resolved. They speak very appreciatively of the system of playground buddies and friendship stops in the outside area.

The school is a warm, friendly, and welcoming community for all families, regardless of their religious belief. Parents speak of pupils being excited about going to school. Attendance is very good. Parents and staff are committed to the school's Christian vision and values and recognise their positive impact on the lives of the pupils. Staff feel valued and appreciated, and they speak of being supported when facing personal difficulties.

Pupils are encouraged and enabled to explore and develop their spirituality in a wide variety of ways in collective worship, in lessons, and in such outside areas as the prayer garden. Each area of the curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and this has a very significant impact on the pupils' being well-rounded, aware, confident and courteous individuals with a strong sense of right and wrong. The school's commitment to caring for every pupil as a child of God has a significant impact on pupils' academic achievement. Staff know pupils very well, and rigorous monitoring by senior leaders enables the school to address the needs of each individual. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make a good start to their education and begin to make good progress, even when starting points are below what is typical for their age. This continues through Key Stage 1, and in 2016 more pupils reached the expectations for their age, or better, than in schools nationally. By the end of Year 4, this was the case for all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with special educational needs, make strong progress across the school.

Pupils are excited by RE. The subject makes a significant contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It contributes particularly, in a way appropriate to their age, to pupils' knowledge of, and respect for, diversity both within Christianity and in religious faith more broadly.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship has a high profile in the life of the school. Its value and impact are widely recognised, appreciated, and readily articulated. Pupils speak very positively about collective worship and the opportunities it gives them to be calm, to reflect, and to learn about the Christian faith. They speak about the positive impact which collective worship has on their relationships and their behaviour. In a discussion with pupils it was said that collective worship leads 'us to want to be like God and Jesus', 'to be a better person', and 'to be more respectful'. Parents recognise the importance of collective worship in promoting pupils' spiritual development and their knowledge of the Christian faith. In a discussion with a group of parents it was said that pupils speak of collective worship as 'if it's the most important part of the day'. Staff also recognise the positive impact of collective worship. One member of staff referred to a recent visitor who had spoken about achieving goals, and gave this as an example of how collective worship raises pupils' aspirations.

Collective worship engages all pupils, and their engagement is evident in their attention and enjoyment, and in the eagerness with which they participate in such things as drama, singing and responding to questions. The lighting of three candles at the beginning of collective worship, to represent both Jesus as the light of the world and God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, helps pupils to develop their understanding of how Christians understand God and of the central place of Jesus in the Christian faith. The prominence of biblical material and Christian teaching ensures that collective worship is distinctively Christian. The invitation to pupils to join in saying the words of a prayer, or to respond to prayer, only if they feel able to make the prayer their own ensures that worship is also inclusive. Frequent reference is made in collective worship to the school's core values, and this promotes pupils' spiritual and moral reflection. Pupils are helped to relate the school's values to the wider world. Their charitable activities have recently included supporting a shoebox appeal from a regional hospital and raising money for a 'Send a Cow' appeal for a farm in Africa.

Collective worship follows the seasons of the church's year. On occasions such as Christmas and Easter worship is held in one of the two local Anglican parish churches. A recent Easter pilgrimage involved visiting the churches of different denominations, helping pupils to develop their understanding of different Christian traditions. Visitors from different churches lead collective worship, and a member of a local Anglican congregation leads a weekly Bible club which is well attended. Older pupils have regular opportunities to lead worship. Pupils are given opportunities to evaluate collective

worship, both at the end of an act of worship and through termly pupil voice questionnaires. Parents and visitors are also invited to evaluate collective worship. These evaluations are used by senior leaders to monitor the impact of collective worship and to inform their planning.

Pupils understand the value of prayer in their spiritual development. In a recent pupil questionnaire, they asked for more outdoor places for spiritual reflection. The experience of the prayer garden, which the pupils designed, being vandalised was used as an opportunity to discuss forgiveness, which is one of the school's core values. Attractive and engaging prayer spaces in the entrance hall and in every classroom encourage and enable pupils to reflect and to pray.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

In RE, standards of attainment for the large majority of pupils are at least in line with national expectations, and a significant number attain higher than these expectations. Attainment in RE compares well with attainment in other subjects. Pupils make good progress, with secure foundations being laid in the Early Years Foundation Stage in preparation for the introduction of RE as a distinct subject at Key Stage 1. Pupils' work displays good development of higher order skills, such as analysis and evaluation, as they progress through the school. These skills enable pupils to understand the impact of religious faith on believers. This was well demonstrated in a lesson which explored the issue of authority, where older pupils showed creativity in using their knowledge and skills. Teaching is good. Lessons link well with pupils' prior learning and good differentiation enables the needs of all learners to be met.

This year a new system of assessment has been introduced. The subject coordinator is well supported by the deputy headteacher in her work of establishing the new system and using it in the monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning. The new assessment system is not yet sufficiently embedded, however, to ensure that it can be used to the best effect in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, in development planning, and in the raising of attainment.

RE has a high profile in the school. The curriculum allocates the majority of teaching time to Christianity, and enables pupils to develop a good understanding of the Christian faith. Their knowledge of bible stories is good. Pupils enjoy and engage enthusiastically with the subject. They speak very positively about their learning, both of Christianity and of the other faiths studied. The making of effective connections with the school's core values helps pupils to recognise and value the contribution of the subject to the school's Christian character.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are committed to All Saints as a church school. They articulate and promote, from personal conviction and with considerable enthusiasm, a vision which is rooted in Christian belief about the value and potential of every person as a child of God. They describe the impact of this vision on the whole life of the school community, and not least on pupils' personal development, on their behaviour and relationships, on their standards of achievement, and on their flourishing. This flourishing is 'because we care', and this caring is an expression of the love which is one of the school's core values. This caring leads to senior leaders having high expectations of the pupils. The tracking of the work and progress of pupils ensures that every pupil is helped to achieve to the best of their ability, and that no one is left behind.

Good self-evaluation strategies are in place and are used by the headteacher and deputy headteacher to drive improvement. While governors share in much of this self-evaluation, procedures for them to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's Christian vision and values are not effective. The absence of such procedures limits governors' strategic planning to drive the improvement of All Saints as a church school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are committed to the professional development of staff and recognise the central importance of this in driving school improvement. This commitment is expressed through the priority being given to the development of middle leadership in the school, and through the support given to staff who aspire to future leadership roles in church schools. The school's partnership with local churches, both Anglican and Methodist, is strong, and enables the school not only to benefit from the contributions of clergy and lay people, but also to contribute to the life of the local community. For example, the school recently provided a choir for a Sunday service at a local church and a group of pupils for an open-air nativity play arranged by local churches. There are also good links with the diocese. The school hosts a termly meeting of headteachers of church schools, and at a recent meeting the RE advisers from the diocese led training in assessment. Partnerships with parents and carers are also strong. Parents speak of a 'collaborative relationship' and of being able to share in the school's ethos as a church school. Arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The RE and collective worship coordinator is well supported in her role and this is enabling her to drive improvement. Leaders have ensured that the areas for development identified in the last inspection report, in 2012, have been addressed.