

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Whitfield C of E Primary School			
Address	Whitfield, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 8JH		
Date of inspection	13 June 2019	Status of school	Voluntary aided as part of the Good Shepherd Academy Trust
Diocese	Newcastle	URN	144478

Overall Judgement	Grade	Good
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?		
Additional Judgements		
The impact of collective worship	Grade	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Grade	Good

School context

Whitfield is a primary school with 34 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is below national averages. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. In September 2017, the school joined the Good Shepherd multi academy trust run by the Diocese of Carlisle which appointed an executive headteacher along with a head of school.

The school's Christian vision

'Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine!' Matthew 5 v 14-16
We seek to be a place that inspires all children to become their best selves. To follow the example of Jesus as we learn to use our gifts and talents to serve one another, the local community and the wider world.

Key findings

- Leaders of the school, at all levels, have used the biblical vision to allow all to shine to guide their Christian mission, ensuring that all members flourish.
- The school embraces equality, treating all individuals with respect and compassion.
- Focused teaching of Christian values and development of positive learning traits have increased pupil resilience and personal wellbeing.
- Worship is valued greatly and shapes the actions of pupils and the positive relationships within the community.
- Religious Education (RE) is systematically planned using 'Understanding Christianity' to underpin a challenging and creative curriculum.

Areas for development

- Celebrate the many opportunities for pupils to shine as a clear outcome of the theological direction set by school leaders.
- Use the growing resilience and curiosity of pupils to broaden their view of national and global opportunities and difference.
- Support pupils to move from adult guided leadership to more self-planned and instigated opportunities which allow the talents of pupils to shine.

How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?

Inspection findings

This small Church school, with a biblical vision to stand as a beacon on the hilltop, uses the deep Christian mission of school leaders to shine a new light for the community. The cleverly considered theological direction draws together the religiously diverse community. Those of a range of religious affiliations and backgrounds see the positive impact and new direction of a school built on Christian values. Pupils are inspired by the vision which helps them to 'be a star and do positive things; not to be dark and negative'. The desire to let all pupils shine guides leaders who endeavour to 'educate the whole child' not just focus on academic achievements. Movement to an executive headteacher model, with a day to day head of school, has raised aspirations and increased expectations. This has brought phenomenal recent progress for all, from what were low starting points. Pupils are beginning to flourish academically, spiritually and socially.

Strong focus on the individual means that everyone gets the chance to succeed, including the most vulnerable. The desire for inclusivity and equality ensures that all are welcome at the school. One pupil shared his thankfulness for a school where 'everyone is unique and liked for the person they are'. Bold restructuring of the curriculum and all elements of teaching and learning are always focused on the desire to raise the aspirations of pupils. Use of current educational and Church of England research, guidance and training allow the head of school to set a positive and very Christian direction. Enquiry based learning and creative curriculum opportunities have brought a brightness to a community which had come close to being extinguished. This is because the vision is all about the individual and unlocking the potential growth for each child. Leaders work tirelessly to support, monitor, evaluate and develop. The whole community are beginning to see the fruits of their labour.

Inspired by deeply embedded values, there is a renewed impetus on the part of pupils to explore disadvantage and to challenge inequality. They speak with enthusiasm and understanding about many social action projects, in particular recent work with Muslim refugees and school sponsorship of a child in Guatemala. These opportunities have had significant impact on attitudes towards world-wide issues of injustice. This is further supported by worship which aims to shape the thoughts and actions of pupils in inspirational and positive ways. There are less opportunities for pupils to investigate and lead social action projects themselves.

Planned and organised events draw on the skills and devotion of the local community, resulting in strong role models for pupils to aspire to. Weekly enrichment time particularly draws on the school vision. Parents and visitors share their wide-ranging skills, working with pupils to plan, prepare and assemble a host of creative projects. The school, as described by one member, acts as a 'remarkable community hub'. Parents and community members appreciate the impact of the many positive experiences on their children. They are less able to link these outcomes to the theological basis of the school vision.

Strong relationships flourish, where older pupils offer friendship and encouragement to younger pupils who glow in the light of love shown to them by their peers. All are welcomed and accepted for who they are. Drawing on their core values of trust, justice and thankfulness, behaviour is good and pupils show kindness to one another. Underpinned by the school vision, mental health and wellbeing is a priority, with staff training and robust policies in place. Pupils have their voice too. Through the school council and through reflective journals each child's interests and ideas form the fabric of the school.

With its focus on the school's vision and values, inclusive collective worship nurtures the spiritual lives of this community well. It provides a valuable space for thinking and positive growth. The head of school uses the small community size to deliver worship which is intimate, inspirational and interactive. Parents appreciate the 'personal and open' way that worship leaders share their own faith. Pupils participate with interest and enthusiasm. They are regularly active and involved in delivering worship but have a growing desire to take further responsibility to design how they share their faith through worship. Focus values are clearly understood by pupils who link messages of the Bible and the teaching of Jesus with their own actions. Big questions throughout the curriculum and especially in worship help pupils to analyse personal action and impact. The 'jar of service' helps pupils to articulate how even the smallest positive action can reverberate across the community. Pupils are in no doubt that Jesus is the role

model for such positive actions and speak with conviction about how the Holy Trinity of God gives them support and direction in different ways. Prayer is central to worship and the school day. Well-used prayer areas in class and around school support pupils' ability to reflect and share their deepest thoughts. Pupils use these areas to share worries, seek support and to relieve frustration. A young pupil spoke with maturity about how 'I often go and hold a reflection stone and just breathe so I can be calm like Jesus'. Parents see the impact of prayer which is 'brought home as a tool' to help their children in life and at their future school.

The local church parish serves this geographically isolated school impressively. Joint activities and services broaden pupils' understanding of the wider Christian family. Key festivals, such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost are celebrated which enrich the worshipping lives of all. Clergy and church members are regularly welcomed in to school and pupils enjoy the opportunities this creates to celebrate and sing together.

RE expresses the school's vision by enabling pupils to shine for themselves and others. Pupils are proud of their work in RE and speak convincingly about Christianity and a wide range of other religions, as a living representation of the diversity of their own school. Pupils visit places of worship and meet people of faith, including Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and members of the local Baha'i community. Pupils here know the importance of acceptance and listening to others. They understand that faith is a personal decision and RE plays a significant part in building these positive attitudes. It is just another way in which this Church school has learned to be a beacon of light in the lives of the whole community.



The effectiveness of RE is Good

RE is given great importance in the curriculum and standards in the subject are high. Curriculum planning is in place and, with support of the diocese, intertwines the local agreed syllabus with the new 'Understanding Christianity' model. Enquiry based learning, linked to big questions, offers pupils many opportunities to reflect deeply and confidently give their own opinions. Learning is monitored and assessed through a newly implemented system, where pupils match their own evaluation of their learning against that of the teacher. This is beginning to create intuitive learning where pupils are aware of their strengths and areas which need more focus. The head of school and executive headteacher, governors, Diocese and partners of the multi academy trust work hard to monitor teaching and learning and move standards forward.

Executive headteachers/head of school	Claire Render and Rob Blake/Katherine Ayre
Inspector's name and number	Alan Baker 903