

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Chollerton Church of England Aided First School**

Station Road,  
Barrasford,  
Hexham,  
Northumberland,  
NE48 4AA.

#### **Diocese: Newcastle**

Local authority: Northumberland  
Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> July 2009  
Date of last inspection: May 2006  
School's unique reference number: 122272  
Headteacher: Mrs Susan Wildsmith  
Inspector's name and number: The Revd Nicholas Chamberlain 508

#### **School context**

Serving a collection of small, rural villages, Chollerton is a very small school. All pupils are of white British origins. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average and the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is well below the national average. This is the second inspection since the school achieved aided status.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chollerton Church of England Aided First School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

When I asked the children what they would like me to remember about their school, they wanted to emphasise that it is friendly, fun, Christian, in a beautiful place and that everyone gets help when they need it. I agree with their assessment. These delightful, mature, knowledgeable young people are themselves clear evidence of the outstanding distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chollerton First School as a Church of England school.

#### **Established strengths**

- Modelled by the staff, Christian values pervade the school, ensuring that this is a loving, safe, creative environment in which children develop outstandingly well.
- Reflective and powerful worship sends children home with positive experiences of the day echoing in hearts and minds, ensuring that the ethos of the school extends into the community.
- Differentiated, focussed, well-planned lessons lead to outstanding achievement in Religious Education.
- Seemingly seamless, highly strategic teamwork among all adults connected with the school establishes Chollerton as an outstanding context for Christian education.

#### **Focus for development**

- Use the opportunity provided by the prospect of a new incumbent and the publishing of a new National Society SIAS toolkit to review the school's achievements in fully embedding aided status and to revisit the nature of the partnership between school and parish.

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

The School Brochure states: 'It is the intention of Chollerton First School that all people involved in school are valued and feel valued. This is achieved by particular care in personal relationships between staff (teaching and non-teaching), pupils, parents, governors and visitors to the school'. What is stated in the Brochure is lived out in reality: this school has an outstanding ethos that is imbued with Christian love. The staff's ability to act as role models

results in extraordinarily good behaviour. Children support and understand each other. Where a child has a particular need this is identified and handled in a way that is deeply respectful. Personal, moral, cultural and social development is ensured by offering a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. One of the keys to this development is the knowledge that the staff have of the children. This, in turn, underpins each child's developing sense of worth, their ability to handle peer pressure and their ability to take decisions. Spiritual development is ensured by the able linking of religious education and collective worship with curriculum themes and regular opportunities for reflection, in lessons and at other times such as before lunch.

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

Collective worship occurs at the end of the day, and this relatively unusual positioning allows it to flow out of school into the rest of the children's lives and the wider life of the community. As with everything else at Chollerton, preparation for worship, by both adults and children, happens unobtrusively and very efficiently. The school sits together and the children choose where they sit: there is no imposed hierarchy. Worship begins and ends in a definite way but without ostentation. The invitation to worship is very clear, and the time is distinct, but you realise that you are worshipping only when the worship has begun; further indication of how intrinsic worship is to the life of the school. Worship is planned and reviewed and, again, a great deal of its success is down to the staff's knowledge of the children and to organic systems that have been established over time. The parish priest is a valued contributor to collective worship.

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

The school has now fully incorporated the diocesan syllabus into its Religious Education provision. Well-planned lessons, combined with outstanding knowledge of the children by teachers and other adults, ensure that the children learn extremely well. In Early Years Foundation Stage whole class teaching morphed into highly differentiated work in pairs. The level of support offered by the adults to the children, together with the way that the children encourage and support each other, contributed to the creative and reflective experience that was the lesson. In Key Stage One there was another example of this easy movement from whole class learning to supported independent learning. This lesson demonstrated how Religious Education links in with personal and social development, offering the children key opportunities to relate their Biblical learning to their own lives. The four year plan for Religious Education ensures that whatever the particular age combination of children in each of the classes the children are always working on something that is fresh for them. The level of teacher-knowledge of each child ensures that whatever their abilities or age, they are always working appropriately.

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

The extraordinarily coherent staff team, many of whom have been in post for quite some years, deliver the life of the school in a way that combines service to the whole community with clear Christian values. The school development plan includes a section that relates to foundation issues and clearly the school takes its value base very seriously. The positive transition to aided status has been very well led and managed. The head teacher has undoubtedly been a key agent in this transition, but she has worked with other staff, governors and parents to ensure that the transition was understood, accepted, and a helpful addition to the school's identity in the community. A second key participant, the local parish priest, is very shortly to retire. Relationships with the parish are strong. This vacancy in the parish, together with the imminent publication of a new evaluative toolkit by the National Society, perhaps offers the school a natural opportunity both to take stock of its achievements in fully embedding aided status and to revisit the nature of the partnership between school and parish. Able and active governors also contribute strongly to the life of the school, offering a key range of experience and skills.