

St Andrew's C of E VA First School, Heddon on the Wall, NE15 0BJ
Newcastle Diocese
Northumberland LA
Date of inspection: July 7 2009
Date of last inspection: June 2006
URN: 122275
Headteacher: Mrs Sue Ellis
Inspector's name: Mary Pedley
NS number: 361

School context

The school is situated in a private housing estate and serves the local and surrounding area, including families based at Albemarle Barracks. Church status and an inclusive ethos, result in parents choosing to bring their children here from outside the catchment area. There are 132 children on roll, including the Nursery and most children are from White – British backgrounds. They are taught in year group classes with Nursery children in an adjoining unit.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Andrew's Heddon on the Wall Church of England First School are good

Since the last SIAS inspection in 2006 there have been clear improvements which have enhanced the Christian ethos of this voluntary controlled school. The Head Teacher's strong Christian values are shared by all in the community. These underpin an effective and collaborative style of leadership and management.

Established strengths

- An outstanding and distinctive Christian character impacts on all in the school community and is reflected in the way all children are nurtured and valued
- The strength of the school's presence and involvement in church and local communities which creates very good community cohesion
- The collaborative way in which staff work and share their expertise in Key Stage teams

Focus for development

- To strengthen the profiles of collective worship and RE through consistent and effective use of evaluation to inform school improvement as a church school
- To encourage governors to use monitoring to further enhance self evaluation of the school as a church school

The school has an outstanding and distinctively Christian character which has a positive impact on all learners and all in the school community.

A strong Christian ethos permeates every aspect of school life. There is enthusiasm and commitment from all in the school community in developing the whole child within a very caring and supportive Christian environment. Christian values are evident in every aspect of the school, particularly in the quality of care and in the way all are respected and valued as individuals. Children are rightly proud and speak clearly of how Christian values affect all that they do. They have high levels of self esteem and confidence, and respond with natural courtesy, respect and consideration of each other and of adults. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth and understanding is very good and is gained from good RE learning and meaningful worship experiences. Staff are excellent role models and encourage creative and independent styles of learning within a strong Key Stage team ethos. The school is a living and essential part of the local and church communities. Children have a clear understanding of the Christian values they practice and gain in supporting and giving to the community, as well as appreciating what the community offers to them through curriculum enrichment. This strong awareness and practice of

community cohesion was very evident in the monthly coffee morning planned and arranged by YR and Y3 working together for an excellent event valued greatly by the mixed communities attending. Displays around school are bright and interactive, giving good support to RE learning and worship time experiences through well connected cross curricular topics. Though RE learning is good, it would be further enhanced through ensuring that there is consistent assessment of learning that reflects the two attainment targets.

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

The impact of worship time is good. Collective worship is an effective conclusion to the end of each day with the whole school and all staff sharing in this time. This is achieved through the good range of worship experiences which develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. This impact has also been enhanced through a greater variety of leaders, with the parish priest and Methodist minister making regular and valued contributions. Other visitors, from a variety of Christian denominations, also contribute to worship through sharing their experience of the world wide church. This was evident from the valued contribution made by a leader who had previously guided the children in supporting Thai orphans and who had returned to show and tell the children about the Christian orphanage she had recently visited in a Buddhist country. Children's responses clearly showed their understanding of the reasons for and the value of their giving. Worship is distinctively Christian and helps to increase children's understanding of the Anglican tradition through good use of prayers and responses. A weekly celebration assembly, where parents are invited, is well established and has a clear and valued effect on all children throughout the week in all aspects of their school life. Though the impact of worship has improved since the last inspection, there still needs to be further emphasis given to consistently effective evaluation of worship time by both worship leaders and governors. Governors are very supportive, but could ensure that the recent positive and valuable focus on Christian distinctiveness includes effective evaluation of collective worship that informs school improvement.

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

Though the overall impact of leadership and management of this school is good, there are some outstanding elements. The Head Teacher's style of leadership encourages excellent teamwork in the way that both staff and children work. The ethos of a creative curriculum strongly encourages all children to understand and practice Christian values and to know right from wrong, fair and unfair. Children in Y1 and Y2 classes, enjoying a meaningful exercise on 'sharing', were confident in explaining how wrong should be managed, unfairness can be corrected and how teamwork can improve a working context. This attitude is very evident throughout learning experiences in all classes. The recent focus on 'Church coming to School' has been effective in developing meaningful spiritual and pastoral links between the church community, the parish priest, parents and governors, who support the school well in promoting its Christian vision. Parents speak highly of good communication between school and home and clearly value the Christian aspects of leadership and management. Parents and others in the local and wider communities also appreciate the strong sense of community cohesion that the school encourages and practices. There are established and valued links with Albemarle Barracks which have been effectively and meaningfully developed since the last inspection. The recently appointed Padre is enthusiastic in encouraging this link and a Major is a school governor. All staff are supported well through good opportunities for professional development and support each other through sharing their skills and expertise in a very effective team ethos. Foundation governors are concerned and keen to support the school in all that it does to provide children with a high quality experience of church school education. Though there is improvement in the effectiveness of leadership and management since the last inspection, a stronger focus on consistent and effective self evaluation of the school as a church school, especially through religious education and collective worship, would further improve this aspect.