

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Morpeth All Saints Church of England Aided First School

Pinewood Drive,
Lancaster Park,
Morpeth,
Northumberland,
NE61 3RD.

Diocese: Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland

Dates of inspection: 2nd July 2009

Date of last inspection: 10th May 2006

School's unique reference number: 122297

Headteacher: Mrs C. Dickinson, Acting Headteacher Mr T.Jones

Inspector's name and number: The Revd Nicholas Chamberlain 508

School context

Situated in pleasant grounds on the edge of Morpeth, this smaller than average school serves the community of the estate in which it is set and a number of outlying villages. Most children are white British, there are fewer than average children entitled to free school meals and the number of children with learning difficulties and or disabilities is well below average. The school has been coping with the effects of disruption following illness in the senior management team during the last two years.

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

With strong capacity to improve further once leadership has been stabilised, this school is nevertheless offering education that is underpinned by secure and increasingly clearly articulated Christian values.

Established strengths

- The school lives out its value statement: this is a community of love, laughter and learning in which the Christian foundation has real impact.
- Well-planned and delivered worship contributes to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children.
- The well-planned, passionately co-ordinated and capably delivered Religious Education ensures that the children have good subject knowledge.
- The acting head and his staff, in honest partnership with the governing body, by focussing firmly on the welfare and learning of the children, are building a team with strong potential to ensure the school's development.

Focus for development

The school's journey from secure but previously implicit Christian foundation to more articulated and enabling Christian foundation will be helped by:

- Extending the process of self-evaluation established by using the National Society's toolkit to include more stake-holders.
- Ensuring that systems for assessment in Religious Education and for the evaluation of worship are properly embedded and delivering to their full potential.
- Considering the appointment of a school chaplain (lay or ordained) to offer pastoral care and advice on spiritual development to children and adults alike.
- Ensuring that the headship is held by someone with a distinctive vision for the school.

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

The school's commitment to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues to bear good fruit. Children are happy and mature well. They love showing off their school. They are out-going and friendly in attitude, and caring and supportive of each other. They know what to do if someone is sad or lonely; the buddy system works proficiently. Excellent behaviour ensures that this is a good context for learning and growth. Staff members now

have a clear picture of what it is to be a church school and this is beginning to support further progress in spiritual and moral development. The recently renewed classroom reflection areas are also contributing to the children's development and might do so even more strongly if a more coherent and sequential approach was to be introduced across the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The Deputy Head, as Worship Co-ordinator, is helping to lead the renewal of this central aspect of the school's life. A new two year rolling programme has been introduced. Child-led worship in Key Stage Two, which started earlier this year, is having a positive impact on the children's spiritual development. Children spoke enthusiastically about this to me. Both key stage worships that I witnessed provided opportunities for reflection that were well used. The teacher-led Key Stage One worship was remembered by the children later in the day; positive evidence that both the style and the approach were suited to the occasion. Enthusiastic singing is evidence, also, of enjoyment and powerful impact. The contributions of clergy and other visitors are welcomed and helpful also in contributing to cultural development. The school will learn more about the impact of worship on its community as it evaluates what it does more regularly and consistently. As more children have the opportunity to lead worship, writing their own prayers and choosing their own music and readings, they will continue to grow and I am confident that the effect of the worship also on adults, including parents, will continue to deepen. It will be important to assemble celebratory records of different worship events, both as evidence of achievement and as tools to help ensure progress.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

In all of the Religious Education that I observed, I was impressed by the maturity of the children's responses and by their good knowledge of the subject. In one lesson, which involved the telling of the story of the conversion of Saul, children contributed strongly, acted out the story spontaneously and with style, and confidently shared feelings and ideas. When invited to consider how Ananias might have felt when instructed to visit Saul, one child said: 'He might have felt worried, because he knew that Saul didn't like Christians, but he might also have been happy, because God had chosen him for a special job'. In this and in all the lessons that I observed, children helped each other in their tasks, affirmed each others' verbal contributions and remained well-focussed and engaged. The subject co-ordinator offers very good leadership. Planning is secure and detailed. Diocesan resources are well utilised. In all the lessons that I observed, the staff taught with dedication and commitment. The system for assessment is newly in place and once bedded in will increase the school's understanding of the children's progress, thereby helping to raise standards further. Governor involvement in the subject is increasing.

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

The last SIAS inspection referred to the school's 'implicit Christian values, attitudes and expectations'. These values, as expressed in pastoral care and prayerful love, have helped ensure that the school has remained a secure and positive environment for the children, even during a difficult time in its life. Links with the parish churches and clergy have remained positive and helpful. The school retains its focus on serving the whole community. The school's motto 'love, laughter and learning' is referred to by many as a helpful way of beginning to express its underlying values more obviously. The school is now working to put into place the findings of its self-review system and of its surveys of children's and adults' opinions. The work of the SIAS toolkit, when extended as the school intends, will help to increase levels of confidence in the way that its Christian foundation can enrich the lives of everyone connected with All Saints. The Governing Body, in particular, through this positive review process, will be enabled to consider how best to offer pastoral care and how best to act as a critical friend. The appointment of a school chaplain might ensure both the offering of pastoral care and spiritual wisdom and the freeing of governor time for more lesson and other observation. This, in turn, will contribute to the developing systems of accountability by which the school will continue to make positive progress. Staff members speak of a growing sense of team, of eyes being opened and of an increased appreciation of common goal, much of it achieved under the leadership of the current acting head teacher. In all of this, the Christian foundation of the school, with its spiritual, personal and cultural resources, is proving to be a vital stimulant. It is now crucial that a head teacher is appointed who has a distinctive vision for All Saints.