

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Berwick, St. Mary's C. of E. Voluntary Controlled First School

Newfields
Berwick upon Tweed
Northumberland
TD15 1SP

Diocese: Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland
Dates of inspection: 10th November 2010
Date of last inspection: 29th February 2008
School's unique reference number: 122271
Headteacher: Mrs. Elizabeth Hush
Inspector's name and number: Mr David Johnson 693

School context

This school is situated on the edge of the coastal border town of Berwick. It is the most northerly town in England. The school serves a housing estate and a local Traveller community. There are 115 pupils on roll. There are close links with the community including the Church. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy School's status and Activemark.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's. C. of E. First School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The school exudes a child-centred philosophy based on Christian values with a particular focus on hope, friendship, compassion and trust. This contributes significantly to a calm, supportive, happy and healthy environment where learning and encouraging one another are over-arching principles. Excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments link through all curriculum areas leading children to see God in all things. St. Mary's has established an outstanding and cohesive learning community.

Established strengths

- Christian values are lived out in action making this an exceptional environment for growth and learning.
- The high quality partnership and strength of relationships between all stakeholders.
- Strong Christian role models provided by Headteacher, Staff and Governors.
- Excellent links between school, church and local community, offering an enriched curriculum.
- Inclusive, high quality acts of collective worship that contribute greatly towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the school community.

Focus for development

- Improve the opportunities for reflection and stillness outside of collective worship including the use of designated spaces for this to happen.
- Explore opportunities for more courses related to leading collective worship for a variety of stakeholders

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

The school's Christian character is reflected in the exceptional relationships which exist at all levels. Children talk openly, enthusiastically and confidently about the special nature of the school, the importance of prayer, worship, care for one another, and the joy they have for school life.

Displays throughout the school enrich and emphasise the Christian ethos very well.

The children speak highly of the responsibilities entrusted to them as key players in the school's management through roles such as the School Council and Pupil Voice. The school

community is very much aware of the needs of others both at home and further afield and understand the importance of supporting charities: a great effort goes into supporting them. The excellent behaviour, friendliness of the children, their mature observations and their motivation in work and play are impressive. One child, when asked what he liked most about the school said:

“The staff’s attitude, it’s really nice, everyone matters.”

Parents are highly supportive of the ethos and speak positively about their relationship with the school. One parent commented:

“This is a great school and I enjoy the weekly family services and the coffee mornings that follow. You really feel part of the school; there is an atmosphere of mutual respect”.

The Christian foundation of the school is lived out in so many ways. This is a supportive, inclusive outstanding school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is distinctively Christian, at the very heart of school life, and is based around a carefully constructed cycle of well-planned themes where the presence of God is acknowledged and celebrated. The school takes care to ensure that acts of worship provide for the spiritual development of everyone within its community. Resources used in Worship add positively to the spiritual atmosphere. The Remembrance Family Worship I observed was extremely well attended by parents, grandparents and governors. All children including nursery children participated. A group of children took a major part in the service, and the readings of their own thoughts about war were very moving. In discussion, later in the day, children were able to speak confidently and knowledgeably about how collective worship affects the school community and their life at home. “It’s like saying thank you to God” “It makes you feel that God is close to you.” All members of the school community, parents, pupils, staff and governors, said they felt included in the worship and spoke appreciatively about the variety of people who lead worship. Monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship involves a variety of stakeholders including the children. This evaluation enables future actions to be taken to further enhance the Collective Worship experience.

The local church and vicar compliment children’s worship experiences. As an important resource in strengthening their knowledge of Anglican traditions and practice, the school community has celebrations within the church.

The areas for development outlined in the last inspection report have been successfully completed.

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

Wise leadership by the Headteacher working with a supportive and enthusiastic staff team and in close partnership with the governing body, enables a coherent expression of the schools Christian foundation.

Consultation and partnership working with all stakeholders ensures that everyone has a voice and is heard. All staff and governors are aware of their individual and corporate responsibility to lead this outstanding Church of England school, and they are constantly looking to improve all aspects of its Christian ethos.

The Christian vision of the management team underpins this distinctive learning community. A clear sense of purpose and vision for continued improvement, together with effective and rigorous evaluation of all aspects of the life and work of the school is ensuring the highest standards.

Excellent policies together with leadership in action, ensures that the school is Christian, open and respectful to everyone, whatever the faith position.

The school leadership clearly understands the particular nature of the context that it serves and has fashioned a community that offers excellent opportunities that are tailored to the needs of the children.

The school has first-rate relationships with parents who speak highly of the achievements and well being of the children and of their complete satisfaction with the partnership created between home and school.