

Whitfield Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Whitfield
Hexham
Northumberland
NE47 8JH

Diocese: Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland
Dates of inspection: 26TH January 2011
Date of last inspection: 10TH October 2007
School's unique reference number:122303
Headteacher: Mrs E Baker
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Carole Snelling 519

School context

Whitfield is a very small rural school serving a widespread community: 22 pupils are on roll with a low proportion eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Early Years Foundation Stage is taught with Key Stage 1. The school works in collaboration with the West Tyne family of 5 other Church schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whitfield as a Church of England school are outstanding

Whitfield school lives out its Christian values in its daily life. Christian love as modelled by the head, staff, governors and pupils is evident in all that takes place in the school. The family atmosphere ensures that all members of the learning community are valued, cared for and nurtured. This is a fully inclusive school; pupils flourish, are happy and make good educational progress. Stewardship of the environment and care for the community are evident throughout the school.

Established strengths

- The excellent relationships and teamwork of the head, staff, governors and pupils underpinned by Christian love and gospel teachings.
- Very effective collaborative links with Church schools in the West Tyne valley ensuring a breadth of curriculum opportunities, peer working and sharing of staff expertise
- The outstanding opportunities provided for spiritual and moral development provided in Religious Education and Collective Worship.

Focus for development

- Develop a strategy for succession planning and professional training that will ensure Religious Education continues to be taught to a very high standard.
- Work with the pupils to allow them to develop a structured means of evaluating Collective Worship.

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

Whitfield is a happy secure school with a warm, friendly and caring family atmosphere. Individuals are given the opportunities and confidence to develop self esteem and academic potential. Attitudes to learning are good, pupils are enthusiastic and motivated to achieve, their behaviour is excellent. Weekly assemblies recognise and celebrate achievement. Parents commented "this is a very loving school, the children are taught to look out for one another and care for each other, they are taught thankfulness, values, and kindness". Pupils speak readily of the need to care for others; a buddy system operates, "so no one needs to be sad and lonely" The school uses its Christian character and rich creative curriculum to

nourish, encourage and challenge the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of learners. Pupils express their views and ideas through the School Council, and in lessons, they know that their opinions are listened to and valued. Regular fundraising activities support a variety of local and international charities, reflecting Christian stewardship. Pupils are very aware of the need to live in a sustainable way and enjoy caring for the environment. Links with a Church school in Newcastle and a primary school in Battersea provide an opportunity to learn about cultural diversity.

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

Collective worship is a shared experience at the centre of the school life; the Christian ethos is woven through the day. A well planned schedule follows the Anglican Church year and topical issues. Stakeholders regard worship as special and value the time for reflection. Led by the head it is a joyful occasion, all participate in prayers, music, singing, listening attentively and sharing their thoughts and questions. Children are encouraged to reflect on and respond to what they have heard and experienced. Pupils are confident in leading prayers and feel that prayer is important, "God is everywhere you can talk to him anywhere". Worship provides excellent opportunities for spiritual growth, in a story of a sinking boat pupils were asked think about God as a lifejacket. Pupils have an excellent rapport with the Rector; each half term he leads worship. Festivals are celebrated in church and during the Eucharist pupils and families receive a blessing. A focus for development in the last SIAS was governor involvement in monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship. Excellent progress has been made. Regular visits by the Chair and Foundation Governors have resulted in concise and helpful evaluation. At an Easter celebration, a parent governor noted "this was a meaningful service which is important to children's spiritual development" It is part of the school development plan to review how pupils can make a more structured evaluation of their Collective Worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE follows the Diocesan syllabus modified to include Hinduism ensuring that there is no knowledge gap when pupils join their Middle School. The RE coordinator is a knowledgeable and enthusiastic HLTA; she plans, delivers and resources RE across 5 Church schools. Skilled use of Godly Play, reflection time, thinking skills and a variety of learning styles ensures pupils benefit from creative, thought provoking, memorable lessons. Excellent opportunities for SMCS development and learning about Christian traditions are evident. Pupils are enthusiastic, participating fully and thoughtfully. Differentiated activities allow pupils to access learning at their own pace. A programme of skills-based assessment linked to AT1 and AT2 ensures progression is monitored and recorded. Standards are above national average.

Annual themed days for Religious Education across all 5 Church schools are exemplary. Parents "are appreciative of the way in which RE is made relevant to the children" Pupils say "the teacher tells us about God and Jesus". RE is important in the life of the school, contributing to its Christian distinctiveness and community cohesion, the impact of which would be diminished should the RE co-ordinator be unavailable. Governors as they carry out their review of RE, need to consider the issues of succession planning and INSET for other staff.

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

Behind the vision to make Whitfield outstanding is the gentle, caring support of the head teacher, who leads her team by modelling Christian love, stewardship and forgiveness. Productive working relationship with local Church schools allows children to share their faith, study with peers and experience a wider curriculum. Hardworking governors are proactive in supporting the head and staff in evaluating the work of the school; support for RE and Collective Worship is valued by staff. Governors are aware of the need to consider the issue of succession planning. Excellent links exist with the local parish and wider community. The head is a member of the PCC. Parents have confidence that if there were any concerns they would be dealt with immediately. Good Diocesan links are valued. As the Chair of Governors commented "this school lives and breathes its Christian ethos."