

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Ellingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School**

Ellingham  
Chathill  
Northumberland  
NE67 5ET

#### **Diocese: Newcastle**

Local authority: Northumberland  
Dates of inspection: 19.11.2007.  
Date of last inspection: July 2003  
School's unique reference number: 122289  
Headteacher: Mrs Caroline Dickinson  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jean Mulley 358

#### **School context**

This is a very small rural school situated in an isolated position outside the village of Ellingham close to the Northumbrian coast. There are 44 pupils on roll. A significant number of pupils have learning difficulties and / or disabilities.

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

The Mission Statement "this is a small school with a big heart" is lived out in the daily life of this school. An inspirational headteacher whose beliefs and ideas are firmly rooted in Christian love ensures that this statement is fulfilled. In this fully inclusive school everyone knows that they are valued and respected. As one governor described it "this is an incredibly lovely place to be" This sums up the essence of this school.

#### **Established strengths**

- The outstanding Christian ethos which is evident and explicit throughout the school
- The fully inclusive nature of the school – this is a school for all who come through its doors.
- Dedicated and enthusiastic teachers who work well together and set a very good role model for pupils
- Enthusiastic and supportive governors who by the personal commitment they have made are genuinely involved in the life of the school.

#### **Focus for development**

- Continue as at present so as to enhance even further the distinctiveness of this Church school.
- Develop the use of the natural beauty of the local area as a resource to support the spiritual development of pupils and to give them an all round excellent quality of childhood.

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

This is a happy school where Christian values of love of all, tolerance, forgiveness and not being afraid to admit you are wrong are very important. A strong atmosphere of love, warmth and friendship is evident throughout the school. Children are regarded as unique individuals made in the image of God. They are encouraged to know their own worth. Staff are enthusiastic and committed and set a very good role model for pupils. Very good relationships are to be seen between all stakeholders. Children state that they enjoy coming to school and that they feel safe and secure in their school environment. Parents feel that their children are well cared for and speak of the close family atmosphere in a school where everyone knows and cares for everyone. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are found across all areas of school life. This is viewed by staff as being very important to the life of the school.

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

Collective Worship is thoughtfully and sensitively planned initially by the head and parish priest and finally in consultation with the whole staff. Thought is given so that themes fit in with the Anglican year calendar. Worship is well structured with time for prayer and reflection in a calm peaceful atmosphere. Stained glass windows, made by the pupils, form a background to a small worship table which has a cross and a candle. This all creates a very good ambience for worship. Children have a very positive and reverent attitude to worship and are eager to participate. Prayer is used at other times throughout the day e.g. lunchtime and at the end of the day. The school is sensitive to the beliefs and faiths of others and evidence of this can be seen around the school in pictorial and photographic form. The parish priest is a frequent and welcome visitor to the school and conducts school worship on a weekly basis. A recent innovation to worship is that pupils are actively encouraged to plan and deliver collective worship to the whole school. This is so far proving to be very successful.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The school follows the Diocesan syllabus. This area is given a high status by governors and staff. RE is well planned and co-ordinated and is based on a two year rolling programme. Monitoring and assessment take place. Detailed target setting ensures that all pupils make good progress. High quality teaching motivates pupils to learn. A good range of activities ensure that children remain focussed and interested in this area. They are actively involved in their learning and this results in excellent progress. Pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of the Bible. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and teachers' pleasant, calm yet lively approach ensures pupils are interested and on task. Christianity is taught week by week whilst Judaism and Islam are taught in separate blocks. Whole school teaching on certain topics is very effective, however, school needs to ensure that children at the Foundation stage have access to these topics at a level suitable to their understanding. Visitors from other faiths and denominations are welcomed into school on a regular basis. A wide range of bright, high quality R.E. displays is evident throughout the school.

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

The headteacher is totally committed to ensuring that there is a distinctive Christian ethos in this school. This vision is both shared and actively promoted by staff, governors and parents. Strong teamwork amongst all stakeholders ensures that all who are involved with this school feel valued and respected. The chair of governors is a frequent and supportive visitor to the school. Governors not only know their school well but have a genuine involvement with the school. They take their responsibilities very seriously. Foundation governors are aware of the specific role they have in bringing Christian aspects into areas of governance. Parents state that they cannot praise the school too highly and are very appreciative of the way in which their children are cared for. There are very good links with the wider local community which in many ways see the school as being at the heart of their community. This is a school where everyone matters.