

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Heighington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,

Hopelands,
Newton Aycliffe,
Darlington,
DL5 6PH

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Darlington

Date of inspection: June 27 2007 and July 9 2007 (* unavoidable closure on June 27 2007 – no water supplies)

Date of last inspection: March 6, 7 and 15 2001

School's unique reference number: 114223

Headteacher: Mr. M.N. Parker

Inspector's name and number: Mr. Andrew Lumsden No 392

School context

Heighington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is larger than average and serves a village of mostly private housing in a rural area some six miles from Darlington. There are 258 pupils on roll. There are few pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities or receiving free school meals. Most pupils are of white British ethnicity.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Heighington C E Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The school's mission statement is based on a strong Christian foundation providing positive values and attitudes. These underpin the high expectations which staff and pupils have to achieve the best quality teaching and learning where everyone is valued and appreciated as part of the commitment to Christian inclusiveness.

Established strengths

- A high degree of cohesion and shared commitment to the mission of this Church of England school with all valued as contributory members to the school community
- A school ethos strongly rooted in Christian values with community links a significant strength
- Successful development of all learners achieved through the effective, caring support of staff and the wider school community
- Very strong, purposeful and focused leadership by the headteacher in partnership with governors and senior staff

Focus for development

- Introduce evaluation of the provision and impact of collective worship by worship leaders and by pupils
- Develop the monitoring and evaluating role of governors in relation to collective worship and religious education.
- Locate spirituality corners and places for reflection in suitable areas of the school

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

The ethos of the school is strongly rooted in Christian values and links with its community are a significant strength. There are many opportunities to develop the whole child, spiritually, morally, culturally and socially. The Christian nature of the school is acknowledged in its aims and practice whilst enabling the celebration of special days from other faiths such as the Chinese New Year. Emotional well-being is key so that pupils are happy, safe and rise to

challenges presented to them as learners with enthusiasm and confidence. Pupils are keen to learn, have a high degree of self confidence and self esteem and are very well supported by parents. The views and concerns of learners are always taken into account and acted upon. In this the School Council plays an important, albeit at the moment, a developing role.

Staff provide strong Christian role models. They encourage pupils to feel valued from an early age, and to cooperate and support each other as they mature through the school. This is part of the commitment to Christian inclusiveness where there is respect for each one's contribution, irrespective of their own belief or lack of it. Success is celebrated through awards and public recognition of pupils' achievements. Learning is enhanced through links with other communities such as Lesotho and through the involvement of pupils with their own community in events such as distributing harvest gifts to local households and participating in services in the Parish Church.

The needs of all learners are met extremely well through the effective, caring support of staff and the wider school community. Staff and pupils are strongly committed to the school with enthusiasm for its continued success. High outcomes are achieved within the strong Christian ethos where aspirations to improve are acknowledged as the norm.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a significant contributory factor in the Christian ethos of the school. It has a very good impact on pupils' spiritual development and is highly valued by pupils and staff. It is enthusiastically celebrated in singing and other ways with all present enjoying the experience and engaging with very positive attitudes. When speaking about it later pupils are clear about the key messages conveyed. Acts of worship take place in well organised and peaceful environments and include responses, the Lord's Prayer, and the school prayer. In several classes there are prayers at the end of sessions, although in some others this is not developed beyond reflection time.

Pupils attend acts of collective worship in St. Michael's Church in Heighington at key times of the Christian year and contribute to the special displays and events held there. The Vicar is a regular and welcome visitor to school and on occasions will lead worship that provides elements of Anglican tradition in its form and responses. He, along with other worship leaders, offers stimulating and participatory experiences. The school responded to its last inspection by providing some separate key stage worship during the week. This enabled appropriate material and presentations to be used and has greatly enhanced the development of a wider range of staff. Recent opportunities for pupils to suggest appropriate hymns are a welcome development in worship.

The staff member for religious education in Key Stage 2 received considerable professional development. This impacted positively on outcomes such as written prayers used to explore values and emotions. Such expressions from these prayers are *'We are truly thankful for love which gives us the power to have feelings for other people. Show us the way to love and peace in Jesus name.'* Consequently pupils are involved in prayer and worship in meaningful and relevant ways.

Worship is structured on the Church's calendar. Hard issues such as separation and loss are faced up to as well as the more joyful occasions of life. In a recent worship session this aspect was developed linked with the crucifixion and the words of Jesus in Luke 23 v 44-46 making good use of a responsorial prayer based on Psalm 13.

Worship makes a strong impact on the school's distinctive Christian character. The time is now opportune for pupils and worship leaders to be involved in evaluating the impact of collective worship and also its links with religious education.

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

The headteacher in partnership with the governors and senior staff provides very strong, purposeful and focused leadership in taking forward Heighington C E Primary School. There is commitment to continuous improvement and to grow the skills, knowledge and understanding of all in the school as a part of a community based on Christian values and

expectations.

Foundation governors provide a Christian dimension to decision making and the governing body is a strong team with effective collaboration and valued support. When appointing new staff, governors pay due regard to the expressed commitment to the Christian vision and mission of the school by such colleagues. As a consequence there is a high degree of cohesion and shared commitment to this Church of England school by all staff. The moral and spiritual purpose of the school is lived through decisions made and expressed strongly in relationships as part of a triangulation of school, village community and Church, *'a three fold cord is not quickly broken'* (Ecclesiastes 4 v 12).

The school is moving into a federation with a neighbouring church school. Priorities are being accurately determined so that there is focused work in relevant areas. This includes the challenges posed by integrating practice across the federated schools so that the provision of religious education and the organisation of collective worship can benefit from concerted leadership and direction whilst maintaining the good progress being made already in these aspects at Heighington. These developments will allow for a shared emphasis on evaluation and monitoring by lead staff and governors.

The school leadership knows what it is striving to attain, and has the capacity to continue confidently and to good effect through the strong support of its staff, governors and community.

SIAS report July 2007 Heighington C E V C Primary School, Heighington, Newton Aycliffe, Darlington DL5 6PH