

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### High Coniscliffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Ulnaby Lane  
High Coniscliffe  
Darlington  
DL2 2LL

**Diocese: Durham**

Local authority: Darlington

Date of inspection: September 26 2008

Date of last inspection: November 11, 12 and 13 2003

School's unique reference number: 114224

Headteacher: Miss Wendy Aitken

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

#### School context

High Coniscliffe C E Controlled Primary School is a small but popular primary school situated in a rural area of Darlington. Few pupils receive free school meals and only a small number of pupils come from minority ethnic families. The number of pupils with learning disabilities is well below the national average.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of High Coniscliffe Primary School as a Church of England school is good

This school is an effective school with Christian principles and values at its heart, where all are welcomed and encouraged to grow. Shared contributions enable the school to be as a child described, 'A small school but a large family.'

#### Established strengths

- Implicit Christian values have a significant impact on pupils' personal development and progress in learning
- There is a calm respectful and reflective atmosphere in worship which is conducive to experiencing a sense of wonder and the presence of God
- Productive and supportive pastoral and spiritual links have been strengthened with the parish and the school community with an enhancement in the promotion of the Christian vision and core status of the school as a Church of England school

#### Focus for development

- Increased consistency in the provision and quality of spaces for reflection and displays related to prayer or Bible accounts
- Improve the evaluation, by both pupils and staff, of the impact of collective worship
- Improve the evaluation of the distinctiveness of the school, as a church school in such documents as the SEF and the Toolkit to guide appropriate development planning
- Engage with other networks of church schools to enrich the provision in High Coniscliffe through sharing of practice and ideas

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

Pupils are treated with respect and respond in kind, knowing that they are secure, happy and content within this community. Implicit Christian values have a significant impact on their personal development and progress in learning. Pupils have very good levels of self esteem and show good empathy to the needs of others. The Christian ethos strongly supports the social, emotional, moral and cultural development of pupils with the development of an understanding of rights and responsibilities through the curriculum and their spiritual progress is also good. Pupils' views are taken seriously and there is good evidence of the impact of beliefs on professional practice and on the relationships between staff and pupils. The school environment is used to display prayers and symbols of the Christian faith. In some classes there are spaces for reflection and displays related to prayer or Bible accounts but these are not always consistent in provision or quality. A quality display in the entrance touched on attributes of God with descriptions such as 'God is the spirit of love, happiness and friendship'

and 'God is a golden teardrop of happiness in a crowd of silver clouds.' Several classrooms have displays, which include The Lord's Prayer, prayer boards, class prayers and house team prayers. Religious education is confirmed as making a strong contribution to the distinctive Christian character of the school. Pupils are regularly involved in supporting and fund raising for a variety of charitable causes. They support the local church and village community in several different ways through events such as the harvest festival, carol service, and services leading to Holy Week. Through the good buddy system and School Council, pupils positively contribute to the distinctive character of the school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Acts of worship support positive gains in the pupils' spiritual development and whilst well planned, recorded and carried through, they lack sufficient evaluation by both pupils and staff to inform the quality of future experiences and provision.

Learners engage very well with worship with good levels of participation and there is a calm respectful and reflective atmosphere, which is conducive to experiencing the presence of God and a sense of wonder. This was observed in KS1 collective worship when pupils guessed the content of a 'feely bag' containing different fruits, which emphasised the variety and complexity of God's creation. Some pupils are provided with opportunity to write their own prayers, some of which are then used in class, in the wider forum of school worship or through the prayer table in the main hall. Class worship is more relaxed but still reflects the ethos of the school and engages pupils well. In an observed KS2 in-class act of worship the closing prayer was drawn from Psalm 104, a Psalm that focuses on the wonder of God's creation and responses to it.

Pupils are occasionally involved in leading aspects of worship but this is an area in which planning and preparing acts of worship by pupils is underdeveloped with more scope for utilising their skills, abilities and enthusiasm. House team assembly provides for younger children to sit with older ones and to take responsibility for their team's conduct throughout. This contributes well to the distinctive character of the school. The practice of closing prayer is well established in the school and along with grace before meals are strong factors in emphasising the faith system in the school. Visiting clergy from different Christian traditions bring varied practice, some of which reinforces the Anglican tradition in worship, and helps pupils understand the significance of colours, symbols and practices as part of that tradition. This is also reinforced in whole school collective worship and in some class worship too with the use of a cross and candle as symbols of the Anglican tradition in worship, although responsive type prayers were not in evidence.

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

The headteacher now in her second year at High Coniscliffe, has reinvigorated and refreshed the school's spiritual journey as a faith community. The deputy headteacher, staff and governors assist her effectively in this. The headteacher is good at enabling the staff to put her vision into practice. Productive and supportive pastoral and spiritual links have been strengthened with the parish and school community. There has been an enhanced promotion of the Christian vision and core status of High Coniscliffe as a Church of England school. There are half termly meetings with local church representatives including church and parish council members and the vicar who is vice chair of the governing body makes half termly visits to discuss links with the church as well as leading worship on occasions. The parish newsletter also provides for contact with the local church. There is insufficient evaluation in management documents such as the SEF and toolkit on particular provision and its impact on the distinctiveness of High Coniscliffe as a church school. There is an active and well informed support of the large majority of parents in supporting the school as a worshipping community. Whilst some networking with other C of E schools in the Darlington area is in place, there is scope for other networks to be developed beyond the deanery boundaries as well as within them, to assist in increasing the effectiveness High Coniscliffe as a church school. Thus the effectiveness of the leadership and management is good with the capacity and potential to mature in time to be outstanding.