

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Whalton Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Whalton  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 3XH

**Diocese:** Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland  
Dates of inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2006  
Date of last inspection: Feb and March 2002  
School's unique reference number: 122302  
Headteacher: Mrs Melanie Hinson  
Inspector's name and number: Miss Lesley Richardson 394

#### School context

Whalton is a very small school of 49 pupils serving the local village of Whalton and the outlying rural community. The school is a soft federation of 3 schools and the headteacher is also head of one of the other schools working 2 days per week in Whalton school.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whalton as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

Whalton school totally fulfils its aim to "foster mutual respect and understanding within an inclusive Christian community so that children can develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural values." This small, enthusiastic, and vibrant school has turned its size into a major strength. Children are treated as individuals and the school, community and church work together as one family.

#### Established strengths

- High quality leadership and management.
- Confidence and self esteem of pupils.
- Strong Christian vision which drives all work within the school and excellent links with church and community.
- Strong support and vision of governors.

#### Focus for development

- Assessment and monitoring of RE.
- Develop child planned and led Collective Worship into Family Group worship.

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

The school is totally inclusive and the strong Christian ethos throughout reinforces the importance of caring for each other and being part of a family. As one child said "we care and help each other, God makes us behave like that." Christian values are evident in every part of the school – "we listen to each other," "there are no bullies because we know when to leave people alone. Sometimes people need time for themselves." Pupils are compassionate to each other as well as being enthusiastic, highly motivated and showing a high level of independence. The pupils take responsibility for their own actions and reflect on how their choices have an effect. Pupils collaborate and negotiate well and as the SEF states the children "thrive in the can do environment". Staff are excellent role models for the children and form a very strong team where every one is valued and supported. The school is part of a confederation and this has ensured links with other schools as well as access to extra resources resulting in enriching the learning environment. The School Council is very strong and has taken responsibility for refurbishing the toilets this has included raising money and designing the new toilets.

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

Collective Worship is well planned and delivered sensitively and confidently in class and whole school situations. Regular evaluation involves children and staff. Collective Worship throughout the school aims to encourage reflection on Christian values, the awe of God's world and to experience the spiritual. Children are involved with both planning and delivery, leading prayers with own thoughts included for reflection. At the beginning of worship as the candle is lit children say "Jesus is the light of the world oh come let us worship" and on dismissal "As you have been with us in our worship be with us in our work and play." Use of symbols, candle and music encourages the children to reflect and prepare for collective worship. During the act of worship observed children were encouraged to reflect on qualities needed to be a saint and what a saint in 21<sup>st</sup> century would look like. Children replied confidently that qualities should include being kind, fair, just brave, truthful, loving, happy and would look "normal like us". There is child led worship held fortnightly which pupils are keen to discuss and share ideas for future worship. Every class has a prayer area where children are encouraged sensitively to reflect for themselves. There are services held in the church at Easter and Christmas and a Eucharist on Ash Wednesday.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

Religious Education has a high profile in the school. The high quality planning (which has been reviewed in light of revised syllabus) and teaching of RE throughout the school ensures high quality learning. Children in Foundation Stage are led carefully into learning about the church and what it means to be a Christian through imaginative, inspirational and innovative teaching. The specialist teacher in KS1 and 2 enthuses the children to learn and explore for themselves. Creative thinking is accepted as a must in RE at Whalton First School. Children have individual targets and have interviews with the teacher to discuss their progress. Pupils have a great enthusiasm to share their work and are proud of achievement of themselves and others. Cultural differences are addressed through music, art, dance and literature and pupils are encouraged to share the richness of diversity.

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

The governors and staff share a very clear Christian vision for the school which is identified in policy and practice. Links with the church are very strong the vicar visiting school for collective worship and providing spiritual and moral guidance for pupils and staff. The staff have excellent relationships and they form a highly effective team. Children are encouraged to take the lead and responsibility throughout the school including KS2 taking financial responsibility for management of the school garden. There are excellent relationships with the community and the school sends out a monthly newsletter to keep everyone informed and up to date with events in school. The school is involved with a number of community projects including "Northumbria in Bloom" where Whalton won "Best school based project." Work with artists and other schools adds to the vibrancy and life of the school. The governors are involved in monitoring and supporting and take on a challenging role within school. Each governor has an academic and non academic area of responsibility and make a termly visit after which they report back to the governing body. All governors had input into the SEF.

SIAS report November 2006. Whalton CE First School. Morpeth Northumberland. NE61 3XH.