

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Church Schools Report

Whittingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Whittingham,
Alnwick.
Northumberland.
NE66 4UP

Diocese of Newcastle

Northumberland LA

Date of inspection: September 26th 2006

Date of last inspection: October 2001

URN: 122279

Headteacher: Mrs Pauline Molloy

Inspector's name and number: Mary Pedley 361

School context

Whittingham C of E First School is a small rural school. It is the only school in this area and welcomes not only those of the Christian faith, but also those of other faiths or of no faith. The school draws its pupils from a wide catchment, where 60% come to school by school transport. There are currently 49 pupils on role and 9 attending nursery classes. All are White British and are taught in 3 classes. The headteacher has been in post for one year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whittingham as a Church of England school are good

The school has a good and distinctively Christian character which has a positive impact on learners, the school and wider communities. The school brings positive values and attitudes to all aspects of school life. These are embedded in the Christian ethos of the school and in its ethos statement. Parents appreciate the school's open, welcoming policy and the children enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and valued. Through good leadership the headteacher, staff, clergy and the governing body work well as a team in developing the Christian vision of the school.

Established strengths

- A good Christian ethos in which all in the school community are valued and where pupils flourish as individuals.
- Good leadership with effective collaboration between headteacher, staff, clergy and governors in sharing vision and developments which continue to raise standards.
- Good quality collective worship which contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Good relationships and effective links with the church and local community which enhance pupils' understanding of Christian values.

Focus for development

- Develop and implement a more useful system for evaluating Collective Worship which can be reflected in the School Improvement Plan.
- Separate and give equal importance to Religious Education and Collective Worship in the booklet 'Information for Parents'.

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

Relationships between all in the school community are good and the emphasis is very much on the school 'family' and God's 'family'. This is reflected well in the school's new and collaboratively written ethos statement. There is a happy and secure atmosphere where staff and children are encouraged to flourish as individuals. There are good links and partnership with the church, parish and wider community which enhance children's knowledge and understanding of Christian learning and values through involvement with church and village events. The Foundation governors provide good support at every level, checking, evaluating and challenging the school's progress as a church school, and acting as critical friends to the headteacher. The atmosphere around the school is relaxed and orderly and children respond appropriately to all adults. The children show courtesy and consideration to each other and to adults, and have natural good manners. Staff are good role models for the children.

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

Collective worship and prayer are an important part of the school's daily life and care is taken to ensure that worship takes place in a well-organised and peaceful environment. It has a strong Christian focus and major festivals are celebrated both in school and in church with invitations extended to parents, parishioners and local residents. The parish priest, the URC minister, headteacher, staff and children all take regular turns in leading worship time and this gives interesting variety through different presentation styles. Worship time provides meaningful Christian learning for children through participation, prayer and spiritual experiences that reflect a distinctive Anglican tradition. Planning for worship is good and is done collaboratively, with a programme that reflects the Church of England's year as well as national and current themes. These enhance children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The existing system of evaluating collective worship does not enable this to be useful for future planning or to be part of the School Improvement Plan.

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

The head teacher promotes a distinctively Christian vision for the school, working closely with the governors, staff and parish priest in evaluating the school's progress. The school's Christian purpose is clearly expressed in its ethos statement, 'Information for Parents' booklet and other documentation, as well as through a number of icons, photographs, artefacts and displays around the school. Parents feel that the school has a special quality which is distinctively Christian and which impacts positively on the learners by providing them with a sense of identity, and through learning within a caring, 'family' ethos. All staff are committed and are appreciated and valued. There is effective and positive interaction between school, parents, church and wider community which reflects the school's Christian ethos. RE and collective worship are good and RE has been thoughtfully revised by the headteacher and the co-ordinator for these two areas. Resources for both areas are good. The RE co-ordinator teaches RE throughout the school which enables standards to be monitored more closely.