



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Grange View Controlled First School Widdrington

Widdrington
Northumberland
NE61 5LZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland
Dates of inspection: 19 January 2016
Date of last inspection: 18 October 2010
School's unique reference number: 135634
Headteacher: Louise Laskey
Inspector's name and number: Canon Brian Hedley NS619

School context

Grange View is a smaller-than-average sized primary school set in the former mining village of Widdrington. Statistically the locality experiences a whole range of multiple deprivation factors including unemployment, income, health and housing. However the number of pupils has been growing steadily over recent years due to regeneration in the area including new housing; there is more planned. Against this backdrop a number of local, national and international awards have been achieved. An Ofsted inspection in 2015 judged the school to be good.

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

- A fully embedded Christian ethos supports and sustains achievement and well-being at every level – pupil, parent/carer, staff and community
- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher, commitment from governors and focused professional development for all staff is resulting in continually rising standards
- Worship and religious education (RE) contribute substantially towards the school's Christian distinctiveness and underpin the spiritual, moral, social and emotional education of pupils very well
- Relationships with the community and parishes are very strong. As a result aspirations are being raised and a high level of pastoral support across the board is being achieved

Areas to improve

- Make clear in all policy documents how core Christian values raise achievement; this will help to benchmark impact as an integral part of review and self-evaluation
- Ensure that governors' minutes record distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school, rather than leave the evaluations buried in statements about general progress
- Revise strategies for evaluating collective worship to include first-hand comments from learners so that governors know which elements work well, and can more easily modify their policy and planning as a result of their findings

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

A strong Christian ethos provides the bedrock from which the school achieves 'flourishing for all'. Hard-working staff demonstrate in-depth knowledge of every learner. Their drive, commitment and outstanding care results in improved attainment at all levels. This achievement is remarkable set against the very low starting points of the majority of children on entry. Relationships are excellent. The SPARKLE statement - which the children helped to create - reminds everyone of the need to be loving, tolerant and respectful. One child told me that, 'Jesus gave us a pattern to follow; we should return the favour by sharing our values with other people'. Adults relentlessly model the highest standards of behaviour for learning. This is linked closely to the school's core Christian values so pupils know exactly what is expected of them; they are eager to rise to the challenge. A positive work ethic stems from the school's commitment towards ensuring that every child has the 'courage to try, perseverance to succeed and pride in their achievements'. Pupils say their teachers are friendly and that they can always go to them with any worries. As a result of this extremely positive environment, progress is at least good. Pupil tracking procedures are rigorous; teacher planning shows that learners are monitored closely and that staff readily provide support and intervention where necessary. Consequently children at all levels enjoy school; they are included, feel safe and are valued. Displays throughout the school are outstanding; they celebrate 'personal best'. Where relevant, sentences from scripture give more focus to what has been learned. Careful curriculum planning and review of provision has resulted in a timetable which supports spiritual development, personal learning and growth. This applies equally well to the extra-curricular programme which seeks to meet the needs of as many children as possible. One notable example is 'Messy Wednesday' – the school's version of 'Messy Church', where parents, churches, community members and the school join together and work on crafts and other activities. This 'gathering together' also benefits a wide range of local, regional and international charity work; the whole community are learning to develop a distinctive, strong, moral and social conscience. As a Forest School, the child-led outdoor curriculum encourages learners to develop a love of nature and care for God's creation. There are ample opportunities every day to explore the relevance of Christian values for the 21st century. Religious Education (RE) follows the Northumberland Agreed Syllabus. With parents' agreement, governors decided to supplement this with units from the Diocesan Syllabus - for example, Christianity. Governors and the RE co-ordinator recognise an increased depth of thinking from learners and a growing confidence in asking their own unique questions. Children and parents are proud of their school. The atmosphere is relaxed and orderly. Links are very strong. Parents especially value the information they receive through the learning journals which explain what their children are doing each week. They appreciate knowing their child's termly learning targets and what support can be offered to them so they can help at home.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a strength; it supports the school's life very well. Different Christian traditions, elements of Anglicanism such as the Bible, simple liturgy (lighting three candles to represent Father, Son and Holy Spirit), sacraments, traditional prayers and responses and carefully selected contributions from other world faiths, form a carefully constructed calendar of themes. However there is a still lot of flexibility allowing leaders to respond to local or world events as they arise. A variety of worship leaders now share the responsibility of providing opportunities for reflection, prayer and a deepening of thinking. Consequently pupils and adults have a safe place to explore and develop their own values and beliefs, develop a greater spiritual awareness, and have the option of modifying their behaviour and life-style choices in light of their learning. The recently introduced Eucharist - a focus point in the last report - has been made accessible to all. It has enabled learners and visitors to begin to understand that the shared bread represents the presence of Jesus, and that Christians are drawn closer to each other at a

service of Holy Communion. The success of all of this is reflected in the involvement of parents and community members in worship, which has increased markedly over time. High attendance is recorded especially for class-led worship, church services and Eucharist. As a result, a greater sense of belonging to a wider Christian community is being developed and grown. The Anglican parishes of St John, Holy Trinity, and the local Methodist church have been galvanised through their association with the school; their contributions to Christian distinctiveness and spiritual growth are hugely valued across the village. The school has made a good start at developing outdoor meditation and reflection areas. Each Key Stage has access to peaceful places in the school grounds and classrooms, where they can enjoy moments of stillness, prayer and reflection. One child explained that, 'you can go to them with a Bible or holding cross or picture and just think things through'. Learners are encouraged to contribute to the shaping and leadership of worship. As a result they are developing greater confidence when discussing worship issues. However this is not being used to best advantage at the moment. Governors do receive reports about the impact worship is having on learners and their families, but too many of the comments are 'second-hand', reported by adults who write things down for the children. Comments are often descriptive rather than evaluative. This means there is little chance of analysis to show which aspects work best. If this were to be corrected, reports would demonstrate the breadth of opportunity being offered, but also indicate elements which suit the needs of learners and their local community. Children speak enthusiastically about leading worship. They can explain its special significance and the part it plays in shaping each day. They are able to talk about the examples given by Jesus, especially about 'loving your neighbour'; they can also say how this teaching challenges their own thinking and behaviour in today's world.

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

The head teacher, governors and staff at Grange View have drive and passion. They keep core Christian values at the heart of their decision-making and action and communicate their vision with all partners very well. This ensures that the school is constantly improving and that traditionally entrenched low aspirations in the community are being raised. Over time, standards have risen and are generally above that expected nationally. Staff genuinely care for one another. Evidence of this can be found on the prayer board in the staff room where they leave thoughts and messages to offer support for colleagues and their families. The governing body is skilled and well-organised; it meets the challenges that the school faces very well. Meetings have impact; governors are very good at dealing with problems, but minutes suggest they sometimes forget to celebrate their many successes, too! They are conscious of the school being a Christian hub in this expanding community and keep this as an equal priority with their other business. In order to develop even further, governors could build the requirements of the SIAMS Schedule into the school improvement plan. This would give added rigour when assessing the Christian character of the school and the impact of policies. Further, as documentation is reviewed, governors could also ensure that core values are made more explicit throughout policies in preference to a statement at the beginning. For example the Behaviour Policy, rather than being about rewards and sanctions, could better detail what is actually happening in practice every day: love, justice, forgiveness, compassion, reconciliation and reparation is being used to sustain relationships and underpin ethos. The paperwork needs to be revised more often to keep up with evolving practice. Professional development is carefully linked to the school's comprehensive improvement plan and associated performance management priorities; one colleague has recently completed the regional 'Church School Leaders of the Future' course. All of this is contributing very well to the continuing success of the school. Partnership with the community is a great strength. Parents and carers appreciate the 'open door policy'. They feel that they are genuinely seen as partners in their children's education, growth and development. They feel well informed and say that are always welcomed into school.