

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Newick Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School	
63 Allington Road Newick East Sussex BN8 4NB	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Chichester
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	East Sussex
Name of multi-academy trust / federation	Not applicable
Date of inspection	14 March 2017
Date of last inspection	12 July 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	VC Primary 114528
Headteacher	Sophie Thomas
Inspector's name and number	Cathy Slow 826

School context

Newick is a one form entry village primary school with 222 children on roll. Most of the children attending the school live in the village. The majority of children are of white British heritage. The number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is above national average. The number of pupils entitled to the Pupil Premium is below average. Newick is a Teaching School and the headteacher is a National Leader of Education. The school was judged as outstanding by Ofsted in July 2011.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Newick as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school, through its clear, embedded Christian character, supports the wellbeing and achievement of the whole community.
- Excellent, caring and nurturing relationships, based firmly in Christian teachings, enable high standards of behaviour and respect.
- Religious education (RE) and collective worship make a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school.
- Strong links between the church and the school, promoted and supported by engaged and dedicated clergy, enable children to feel part of a wider Christian community.

Areas to improve

- Extend the evaluation of collective worship to enhance the contribution of pupil voice and to gather more evidence of its impact.
- Build on the introduction of "Understanding Christianity" to deepen the pupils' understanding of Christianity and the contribution this makes to their understanding of their own spirituality.

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

Newick school is a safe, caring, nurturing community where children of all abilities and needs are supported and encouraged to reach their full potential. The school vision of "Together we create a spiritual environment where everyone in our school is encouraged to have fun, love learning, be creative, active and caring and be the best they can be", is clear in all it does to meet the needs of children, staff, and the wider community. The school values are

all linked to Bible texts in displays around the school, as well as in worship and lessons, making it clear that they are rooted in Christian teaching. They make a significant difference to the life of the school and are the basis for the approach to behaviour, relationships and teaching and learning. Children are able to talk about what the values mean to them and gave examples such as, “compassion means putting yourself in other people’s shoes” and “treat others as you would like to be treated”. Thus, behaviour is excellent, children say they feel safe and that the school looks after them. The mutual respect shown in relationships between staff and children and the high value of each person as an individual enables children and staff to achieve their best in a strongly Christian environment. This is very much a part of what enables children to thrive at school and why they clearly enjoy being there. Several children said they felt lucky to be at Newick and one child said they were, “thankful for the teachers in the classroom”. It is also recognised by parents who are extremely supportive of the school and say that the Christian foundation makes a significant difference to their children both in school and in the wider community. Parents talked about the partnership with the church and the vicar’s high level of commitment to the school and the families of the village as an important aspect of what the school offers them. They describe the school’s strengths as, “a great dedicated staff”, “community”, “morals” and “a strong value system”. Both the buddy system, where reception children are teamed with Year 6 pupils, and responsibilities in the school, such as lunch time office duties, encourage a sense of responsibility for others and promote self-esteem.

RE is a core subject, led by a dedicated and committed subject leader who is undertaking the training to deliver the Church of England RE project “Understanding Christianity” in school. This a new resource which supports pupils in developing their own thinking and their understanding of Christianity. The work is having a high impact on RE and children have a thorough understanding of what Christians believe which they apply confidently to situations in their own lives. It also makes a significant contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development through encouraging children to ask deep questions and explore complex issues. In RE lessons observed, the Year 2 children were asked to think about what aspects of the Easter story were happy or sad and then to apply this to their own lives whilst Year 6 children were exploring what the importance the resurrection holds for Christians.

Links with Christians in other countries, supported by visitors from other countries, and the school’s charity work, including supporting St Mathew’s Primary School in Rwanda, enable pupils to broaden their understanding of others in communities different to their own. This is reinforced in worship and RE and one child commented, “we learn about other people’s religion and respect them”.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is based on the school values, with each value being the focus for a term. At the heart of worship is an emphasis on its relevance to the children as well as on the language used to ensure that it is inclusive and talks about what Christians believe. It is enriched by close involvement with the church and dedicated involvement from the clergy which ensure that all pupils experience Christian worship in both school and in church. Many families attend church services with their children. Several children in school have asked to be baptised, and the clergy have seen a recent increase in baptisms as well as in church attendance of families of children attending the school. Worship has a strong focus on the Trinity which has enabled pupils to talk with confidence about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and following sessions for the older children led by clergy, children talked about Jesus as a bridge to God, and as enabling our relationship to God. The Trinity is regularly reinforced in collective worship by the lighting of a three-wick candle. There is a strong focus on Bible stories which relate to the message of the worship as well as to school values. In feedback, one child wrote, “every story will have an element of justice, thoughtfulness, forgiveness and compassion”. These messages clearly impact on the pupils and result in a school community where the gospel is lived out in a Christian context. Visiting clergy, including Bishop Nathan from Cyangugu province in Rwanda and the Watoto choir from Uganda, enable the children to develop their understanding of what Christianity looks like in other Christian countries. Visits to places of worship, both Christian churches and those of other faiths, including a recent Year 4 visit a synagogue in Hove, support the children’s understanding of the power of collective worship in other settings.

Prayer forms a regular part of the school day. Children write prayers to share in school and in church, on prayer trees and in reflective spaces in classrooms and shared areas. Classroom reflective spaces are inviting, child focused at an appropriated level and well used by the children. The “Rise and Shine” group, led by the Church community and a foundation governor, is very popular and meets weekly at school to share prayers and Bible stories which the pupils confidently share in talking about their own lives and how Bible teachings help them in difficult situations.

Music, led by a skilled music teacher, forms a central part of worship and regular music sessions introduce the children to a wide variety of hymns and worship songs. Children were singing a hymn for Lent with sensitivity and respect in the worship attended. Each year, the older children rehearse and perform a Cantata in church, enabling them to lead sacred music for the school, their parents and the wider community. This is very highly regarded and well attended.

Regular and detailed planning and evaluation, involving staff, clergy, governors and children, ensure continued relevance and pupil engagement. The Faith Council, a group of children representing the whole age range of the school, regularly work with the RE lead to plan and deliver Collective worship. Members of this group collect feedback from pupils which gives pupils a greater ownership of their involvement in worship. One of the children in this group said, “we help to make the school a better place”.

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

The skilled, dedicated, Christian leadership of the school is at the heart of its success. The headteacher, supported by the deputy head and other leadership staff, ensure that leadership is distributed across the school. This results in everyone sharing the common purpose, driven by the clear Christian ethos, of meeting each child’s needs and delivering high academic standards whilst fostering a strong sense of community and belonging.

Governors make a significant contribution to the school, spending time in classes and leading extra-curricular activities. They have an excellent understanding of the school, both of its performance data and its self-evaluation as a church school. Several governors reviewed the church school self-evaluation last summer and this document is regularly updated and discussed at governor meetings alongside the School Development Plan. The chair has recently undertaken a skills audit under the new governor competency framework to ensure that governors have the skills they need to continue to support and challenge the school to maintain the high standards and Christian ethos.

The school sets challenging yet realistic targets and there is a strong awareness of the pressures on work-life balance for staff. This is supported by having a governor responsible for staff wellbeing and regular reviews of workload. If an additional area is introduced, the leadership team look at what can be removed, “if we add something to the top drawer, we take something out of the bottom drawer”. The high value placed on staff, based on the school’s Christian values of mutual respect, trust, perseverance and responsibility, promotes their development and the school has a strong record of successfully supporting and developing newly qualified teachers as well as growing leaders.

A recent review of SEND by an external consultant has supported the newly appointed inclusion leader and this has had a significant on the progress of children with SEND and those receiving pupil premium over the last two terms.

Partnership with parents is strong and positive. Parents say that the school is well led and value the open-door policy which enables them to raise any concerns they have and to know they will be addressed, all agree that the staff are “compassionate and caring”. Parents also value the contribution of the clergy, describing the vicar as “an ambassador for the school”.

The partnership with clergy and St Mary’s, the local parish, has a significant impact on the lives of all the community. It is highly valued by parents, children and staff. Clergy are regularly in school and take an active part in leadership through governance as well as in worship and pastoral support.

Staff and governors regularly attend training and events, including diocesan training and deanery briefings, ensuring that leaders are looking to the future well informed by diocesan expectations and current trends in education.

The areas for development in the last SIAS inspection around governor monitoring of ethos and the evaluation of worship, have been fully met. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2017 Newick CE VC Primary School Newick East Sussex BN8 4NB