



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Peter's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

North Lane,
Elwick,
Hartlepool,
TS27 3EG

Previous SIAMS grade: Good
Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Hartlepool Borough Council

Dates of inspection: 29 April 2015

Date of last inspection: 25 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 111670

Headteacher: Jo Heaton

Inspector's name and number: Nicholas Chamberlain NS508

School context

St Peter's is much smaller than most primary schools. It serves the villages of Elwick and Dalton Piercy, but draws pupils from across the large ecclesiastical parish of St Peter and also those who choose to attend a strongly Christian school. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well below average, the proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is low, but the proportion of pupils at school action plus or with an education health care plan is above average. Almost all learners are of White British heritage. The school is in a hard federation with Hart Primary School. The Ofsted inspection of June 2013 judged the school to require improvement.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's Elwick as a Church of England school are good

- Rigorous emphasis on what is possible for every person, inspired by a Christian belief that all should be respected because all are created in the image of God, is powerfully raising levels of achievement.
- Collective worship is punchy, participative, responsive and valued by all.
- Dedicated subject leadership and clear goals for development are rapidly transforming standards in religious education.
- Strategic leadership, strongly inspired by Christian faith, is leading to a robustly renewed vision for the school.

Areas to improve

- Develop recorded evidence in books, marking and feedback to reflect the level of understanding demonstrated orally by pupils in order to raise achievement in religious education.
- Review the school's statement of values and mission in order to refocus its Christian vision so that it matches its aspirations for the future.

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

The school has a historically strong Christian ethos. This deeply embedded character, which is fully embraced by learners, parents and staff alike, has sustained the school during the difficult times that followed the 2013 Ofsted inspection. Christian values, especially those of 'respect' and 'love' are tangible as soon as one enters the building. Relationships are exemplary as is behaviour. Rigorous honesty has enabled the staff to work together to raise levels of achievement and to face the taking of sometimes hard decisions. All learners are fully supported whatever their personal needs or aptitudes. Success is celebrated and under-performance supportively tackled. The children love their school, saying 'it is a brilliant place to be' and that 'no-one is left out because they are always with God' – demonstrating that Christian values really do contribute to achievement, development and well-being. The children's instinctive response to each other's particular needs and gifts, clearly expressed by the School Council, is also well-evidenced in lessons and during worship. Personal mindfulness, spiritual responsiveness and cultural awareness are all outstanding. They are strongly nurtured by the thoughtfulness with which the whole curriculum, but especially religious education, is structured and delivered, and by the fact that the school environment is enriched through wonderful display, 'pop up' reflection areas and keen sensitivity to the differing needs of each child. This really is a school in which everyone is valued for who they are and who they might become. The school's foundational expectation to 'experience God at work' in its life is one that is borne out in practice. 'We're a small school but we've got a big personality' said one child, and it is this personality, rooted in generous Christianity, that is raising standards, transforming achievement and powerfully developing the pupils' awareness of the wider world. St Peter's may be located in a small village on the edge of a disadvantaged town but it has an appetite that will not be limited by circumstance.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The previous inspection's requirement to involve learners in the planning and delivery of collective worship has been fully addressed. The Big Fish group is popular with the children who much enjoy the fact that the worship in the school is 'their worship', and that they are able to contribute on equal terms to the adults. Indeed, whole school collective worship is a truly whole school experience: inclusive, respectful, responsive, both celebratory and appropriately prayerful. Worship is part of the glue that holds the school together, relating well to the school's Christian values and yet never overly insistent in tone. The use of music, to call the school to prayer, to send the school out to work and to vary the tone during worship is a particular strength and is much valued by the children: 'It expressed our feelings and made us think about what the singer said and who is our light in our life'. Learners are confident in responding to liturgical texts, including Trinitarian formulae, and through their answers to questions demonstrate the way that collective worship has strengthened their knowledge about Jesus Christ and their personal spirituality. The school is committed to renewing its evaluation system for collective worship as part of its continued and rigorous programme of self-assessment.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education has improved rapidly in the school in recent years. The introduction of a new curriculum together with a clear and consistent system of assessment has re-engaged learners with the subject and given them clear information about their own progress. The subject co-ordinator, appointed to her post in September 2014, has injected enthusiasm in her colleagues and successfully resourced them by offering well targeted continuing professional development, helpful observation of teaching and an unfailingly supportive and encouraging attitude. Working closely with the executive headteacher and other senior colleagues she has raised aspirations and begun to realise a consistent improvement in achievement. Some lessons observed had outstanding elements, none were merely satisfactory. The teaching of Christianity is a particular strength of the school with learners evidencing strong interest in the

person of Jesus and the life of the Trinity. However, other faiths are also explored with great respect, contributing powerfully to the school's vision of preparing its children to take an active role in British society today. The school has a clear and strategic understanding of what it must do to improve its religious education further and has planned to achieve this by extending the impact of the marking and recording of the children's work.

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

In the short time since her appointment (a time made even shorter by the fact that it includes a period of maternity leave) the Executive Headteacher has devoted impressive energy to leading and managing St Peter's as a church school. A number of significant changes of staff have been made and great care has been taken to induct all new members of staff into the Christian foundation. Working closely with the local education authority and the diocese, and drawing strength from other nearby Church of England schools, the headteacher has ensured that ethos, worship and high quality religious education have all contributed to St Peter's rapid improvement; meeting all statutory requirements in the process. She has identified talent and rewarded initiative. Most members of the governing body have been appointed within the last two years and the partnership between the headteacher and the new Chair of Governors is direct and creative. The members of the governing body know the school intimately, are accurate in their estimation of its strengths and weaknesses and are demonstrating themselves to be highly strategic in making appointments that prepare the ground both for the future leadership of St Peter's as a church school and for the future leadership of church schools in general. The relationship between school, local parish priest and the local parish church is exemplary, mutually enriching and strongly valued by parents and learners. Much that has been done is still taking root – for example 'church in school' is still a relatively new development – but the impact of the actions that have been taken is already clear. The next stage, as the school has itself identified, is to revisit both values and mission statement, in order to ensure that correct emphases are discerned that will best contribute to the school's development in future years. If a certain reticence was observed during the inspection in relation to a number of the school's current values this was due to the fact that the school is already aware that it may have outgrown its current vision. In other words, the school is in the process of looking towards what might come next. While its attractive Christian identity is absolutely secure and underpins achievement, ethos and well-being, it is on the verge of discovering a new and more fitting understanding of its vision for all that it aims to achieve.

SIAMS report [June 2015] [St Peter, Elwick, Hartlepool] [TS27 3EG]