



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



 The **Methodist Church**

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Corbridge Church of England Aided First School

St Helen's Lane

Corbridge

NE45 5JQ

Diocese: Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland

Dates of inspection: 5 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 14 July 2009

School's unique reference number: 327687

Headteacher: Jennifer Ainsley

Inspector's name and number: Nicholas Chamberlain NS508

School context

Corbridge Church of England First School serves the village of Corbridge and its rural hinterland. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below national average, and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is much lower than national. Soon after the last SIAMS inspection in 2009 the school entered a period of considerable turbulence in its management and leadership, including attention from the local media. Ofsted judged the school to Require Improvement in September 2013. A new substantive head teacher took up post in September 2014.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Corbridge Church of England First School as a Church of England school are good

- The team work of the teachers and other staff, their commitment, resilience, humility, faithfulness and professionalism, has led to the modelling of clear Christian values resulting in a school that is a genuinely Christian organisation.
- Collective worship provides a valuable space in the day for personal affirmation, reflection, the exploration of core values and foundational stories and the expression of spirituality, shared and individual.
- The openness and enthusiasm with which the new religious education syllabus and assessment system has been introduced is strongly supporting children's engagement with the subject and developing teachers' confidence.
- Energetic, faithful, absolutely honest, clear-sighted and grounded leadership by the head teacher and governing body is enabling the school to build on its strengths and to develop where growth is necessary.

Areas to improve

- Support children in the shaping and delivery of collective worship, leading to increased confidence and clear affirmation of connections with subject based learning.
- Encourage teachers in the confident delivery of consistently high-quality religious education by sharing good practice both within school and with other colleagues.
- Embed the culture of truthful self-assessment based on gospel values and the school's vision statement to generate confidence and renewed poise.
- Think through how best to develop the school's capacity for theological reflection and consider whether a formal appointment to a chaplaincy role might aid both this and the delivery of pastoral care.

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

The staff team's committed modelling of Christian values has ensured that whatever upheaval the school has endured over the last four years the priority has always been to provide a positive environment for all learners. This has borne fruit in children who are happy in school, whatever their personal backgrounds or ability, and who speak about it as being a safe, good and fun place. The new behaviour policy is welcomed and understood by the children. They comment that the kind of disturbance sometimes caused in the past by children not listening, 'doesn't happen any more'. Both children and adults point to the significance of the school's core values as helping them to learn and to support each other. Children are seeking to apply their knowledge of Bible stories to real life situations in the light of the core values. Moves this term to focus on a smaller number of values and to link themes through worship and into the delivery of Religious Education are making it possible for the whole school community to grow as one. The new focus for prayer in the hall and renewed displays and reflection corners reinforce the message that the school's Christian foundation has a positive impact on everyone, regardless of their own faith position. Through testing times, the school's staff team have held its Christian ethos, and so discovered for themselves some of the riches of the tradition that may not always be appreciable when things go smoothly. The positive impact that their commitment has had for all involved in the school can be extended by offering them continued opportunities and resources for further theological and spiritual reflection. The Christian character of the school contributes to academic achievement by encouraging the staff always to focus on each learner as a child of God. New systems for assessment, clearer understanding of the setting of individual targets for learning and greater opportunity to share good practice in the school are leading to greater engagement in lessons.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is understood as important within the life of the school, and is a key contributing factor to its Christian ethos. Whether in whole school worship or in worship offered in the more intimate setting of the Nursery, the engagement of both adults and children is exemplary. A good balance is struck between celebration and reflection, story and question and answer, verbal prayer and use of visual symbolism. Care is taken to ensure that worship has integrity of its own, but that it connects with the rest of school life. Learners' views are researched and adults' responses evaluated with the result that worship is fresh, continuing to evolve and always relevant. Children contribute confidently when invited and bring their own knowledge of Christian faith to bear on what is happening in the worship itself. This enthusiasm to contribute underpins the school's already discerned clear direction for the development of collective worship. It is planned to involve learners more in leading worship and to move towards a culture in which the children are themselves the originators and ministers of prayer, thanksgiving and reflection, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, rather than that of 'class presentation'. The good relationships that exist between adults and children and among the children of all ages supports this potential shift and will encourage everyone involved to take the necessary risks.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Staff who are committed to the subject and an able, supportive and clear-thinking subject-leader have together successfully introduced the new diocesan curriculum and a system for assessing attainment and progress. Levels of attainment are consistent with those nationally and sometimes higher. As data is being assembled over time it is quickly becoming possible to analyse each child's progress and to plan lessons accordingly. In turn, this is leading to a clearer matching of expectations to each child's capacity in the subject. Class scrapbooks and learners' subject books are increasingly helpful indicators of the progress that is being made individually and collectively. Religious education is developing in the school and as it does so is contributing well to collective worship and to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth. The process of balancing clearer learning outcomes and expectations both for the

whole class and for individual learners is still work in progress, as is the pacing of some lessons. Some outstanding practice was observed, as was some more hesitant teaching. The school's self-reflection and planning already focuses on the need to concentrate the sharing of ideas and practice and to further embed assessment. These things, together with continued support by the subject leader and head teacher, indicate that Corbridge has created all the conditions for a rapid improvement in the impact of its religious education.

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

The turbulence of recent years was located most firmly in the leadership and management of the school and spread to partnerships in the community and to relationships with the diocese and local authority. The hard-working teaching and support staff team sought to sustain the Christian ethos of the school while also getting to grips with issues to do with attainment and teaching and learning, while working with successive acting and interim head teachers. It is testimony to all involved that parents continue to esteem the school highly as a church school. The appointment of an outstanding substantive head teacher in September 2014, with a highly competent acting deputy head, is rapidly transforming the school as a church school; all noted by parents. The school's vision statement was immediately reviewed and renewed, as part of a whole staff process, as a result of which a clearly focused message is being expressed. The Governing Body has also undergone significant recent change with positive new appointments. The actions of the previous Chairman, consolidated by his successor, have helped to create a group of governors that is acutely sensitive to the Christian foundation of the school and willing to ask tough questions in order to ensure that the foundation of the school is lived out in practice and that it is capable of nurturing future church school leaders. Confidence is being restored and partnerships repaired and strengthened, including with the diocese and local authority. Involvement of ministers of different denominations in the leadership of collective worship indicates that links with the local church are once again developing. The head teacher has a positive vision for how partnership with the parish church might be advanced and is very appreciative of the personal support given to her and her colleagues by its clergy. New policy documents and self-evaluation audits are models of clarity. They all cohere with the school's Christian values and vision. The school now has outstanding capacity to make rapid progress as a church school. It meets its statutory requirements in full.

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