



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



 The **Methodist Church**

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Embleton Vincent Edwards C.E. First School

Alnwick

Northumberland.

NE6 63XR

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Newcastle

Local authority: Northumberland

Dates of inspection: 18 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 6 October 2009

School's unique reference number: 122290

Headteacher: Belinda Athey

Inspector's name and number: Mike Falcus NS694

School context

Embleton Vincent Edwards is a very small voluntary aided village first school with 29 pupils. The majority of children are from the nearby area but nearly 50% are bussed in by school transport. The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium is above average as is the proportion of children with special needs supported at "school action." The vast majority are from white British backgrounds. The school is going through a great period of change. The head teacher of six years left in the summer. After a short time with an acting head the substantive head teacher took up post on November 3.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Embleton Vincent Edwards as a Church of England school are good

- The vision and commitment of the new head teacher supported by the governing body in charting the strategic direction of Embleton as a distinctively church school.
- The outstanding relationship between school, parish and village make it 'an extension of the church within the community'
- The role of the incumbent in supporting worship and spirituality and promoting the school as 'a Church of England gift to this place' is an asset
- The school is successful in creating a caring and Christian environment in which children succeed and thrive.

Areas to improve

- Involve all stakeholders in reviewing the school mission statement to ensure Christian values become fully embedded in the life of the school.
- Establish more formal and robust procedures to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Religious Education (RE) and worship.
- Increase pupil involvement in evaluating the quality and impact of collective worship.

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

Embleton is an educationally inclusive school where each child is uniquely valued. Stakeholders describe the Christian values of love, wisdom and forgiveness which underpin its

distinctiveness without being able to recall the exact wording of the Mission Statement. Academic achievement and progress are good. Children with special needs are particularly well supported and achieve in line with their peers; more able pupils do not always succeed as they should. Parents acknowledge the link between Christian character and achievement. One stated, 'values help them to achieve better.' A member of staff said, 'wisdom encourages children to achieve their best.' These values, explicit in RE and collective worship but 'present in everything we do' (governor) lead to excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. A real strength in the school is the positive relationships between all members of the community. There is huge mutual support – between pupils, staff at all levels, parents and governors. For example, a parent of a child with special needs said the school's help had been absolutely fabulous! The head teacher described two very committed teachers and great relationships which lead to pupils wanting to do well. Children are able to relate Bible stories to their everyday life. E.g. one recounted how the story of Jonah taught him about perseverance and 'being bad, then good!' Pupils demonstrate their Christian faith in action through charitable giving, such as the recent Water Aid project for a school in Thailand. The school has effectively addressed the key issue from the last inspection to develop opportunities for awareness of other faiths. This includes units in RE on Judaism and Hinduism, visits to other places of worship and visitors to school. Governors are realistic in acknowledging the difficulty as a small rural school in sourcing other faith groups and wisely have included this as an ongoing action on the self evaluation toolkit. RE enjoys high status and contributes to the school's Christian character. Children enjoy the subject. Staff recognise the values in RE and parents appreciate the way it is taught in a way that children understand it.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and prized by all stakeholders. It fosters Christian values such as wisdom, love and forgiveness. These are modelled by staff and seen in the children's behaviour e.g. in their mutual care and striving to do their best. Worship is distinctively Christian with themes derived from the Leicestershire scheme of work and elsewhere. This term adults and children are involved in exploring Christian values as part of the Values Mat project. Pupils are able to speak knowledgeably about their learning from worship: 'It helps me to be Godly.' The planning and delivery is highly effective. The school has addressed the key issue from the last inspection to build up the range of approaches to worship. It is now well resourced, varied and takes place in hall, classroom and church. Children enjoy worship. They attest to the songs, talk, Bible stories, prizes, prayers, acting out and 'tricks' they experience. A strength of the collective worship is the range of leaders involved - staff, the Vicar of Holy Trinity and particularly children themselves (which was another key action from 2009). Photos show Class One leading on the theme of Harvest. Collective worship is effectively managed. The head teacher and new co-ordinator have worked hard to establish procedures to plan, record and evaluate worship. For example, teachers carry out weekly evaluations which are regularly discussed with the head teacher and improvements implemented. Governors have carried out informal evaluations principally through their attendance at church celebrations but only one formal observation has been conducted. It would be of benefit to extend such evaluations to include governors and pupils. Embleton is a prayerful community. Opportunities exist within and outside of collective worship. E.g. prayers are posted on the Wise Owl Tree in the hall and the prayer board in the corridor, such as Jacob's wish for his mum to get better. The link between school, parish and village is outstanding. The vicar of Holy Trinity leads worship in school weekly and in church to mark significant festivals in the Christian calendar. However, the most cherished collective worship according to all stakeholders is the monthly celebration held in Church. It is very well attended by families, governors and members of the village community: 'Fantastic' (parent), 'a spiritual support for adults and children' (head teacher). All stakeholders articulated their appreciation for the pastoral role the vicar plays in supporting the spiritual and worshipping life of parish and school. The school succeeds in being an extension of the church within the community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The achievement of learners in RE is good. Teachers continue to assess children's work effectively using the National Expectations 8 point scale. A particular strength is the written feedback to pupils. Children recognise the value of this in improving their work: 'they prompt us with questions which we have to answer.' The great majority of pupils' attainment is in line with age expectations. Standards compare well with those in other subjects and children are positive about their work in RE. One commented, 'My work in my RE (book) is better than my literacy book.' RE is a central part of school life and contributes to its Christian ethos. It explicitly promotes Christian values such as love and friendship, e.g. the very youngest children in a lesson about 'I am special', used artefacts from the valuable Chatterbox Resources to explore 'God's love for me and my love for others.' Moreover, staff model and use these values in discussion with children at other times during the week. Themes are drawn from the new Diocesan Syllabus and are predominantly Christian. The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good. Two highly effective lessons were observed on the day. In one, on the theme of light and darkness, quite high order drama techniques, (freeze-framing and conscience alley) were brilliantly used to re-enact the story of Anglican hostage Terry Waite. Children's behaviour and responses are exemplary and they report that they enjoy RE. The leadership of RE is good. Its status has been enhanced by the appointment of a senior teacher as co-ordinator who has worked very hard with staff to ensure that the subject is more dynamic. A range of approaches such as art, drama, music and story keep pupils motivated and engaged. There is a portfolio for RE containing policies, syllabus and resources. However, there is a lack of detailed formal monitoring and evaluation of RE involving staff or governors.

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

The school has recently gone through a period of significant change which has been dealt with well. Led by the Chair, governors have appointed a new head teacher. She has worked tirelessly to review plans and policies and lead training with staff and governors about Christian distinctiveness. Strategic planning is now appropriately taking account of the school's Christian ethos e.g. the new SDP includes a substantial section about Christian distinctiveness. However, whilst stakeholders can articulate many of the values the school stands for they do not yet have a clear, shared understanding of the vision as described in the Mission Statement. Governors are very supportive of the school. They articulate that 'every child is unique in God's eyes', and understand the consequent obligation to raise standards and foster pupils' wellbeing. The Chair and incumbent in particular are fully involved in the day to day life of the school and visit regularly. The Chair is described as a marvellous asset, who 'supports and challenges us'. E.g. the Chair worked with the new head teacher to review the self-evaluation toolkit. The school's partnership with key stakeholders is very strong. The school is undoubtedly the heartbeat of the village: 'the Church of England's gift to this place.' Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, one describing it as in the best traditions of a Church of England school.' It enjoys close links with the wider community e.g. the weekly luncheon club use the dining hall. Governors acknowledge their responsibilities for monitoring the effectiveness and management of RE and worship. They informally evaluate collective worship through their attendance at celebrations held in church. The vicar is involved in planning and delivering worship and the chair has carried out one observation. However, governors are not involved in any formal monitoring of the effectiveness of RE. The arrangements for RE and worship meet statutory requirements and the leadership has effectively addressed the issues from the last SIAS report.

SIAMS report - Vincent Edwards First School, Embleton, Alnwick, Northumberland NE663XR