

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Whitburn Church of England School

Nicholas Avenue,
Whitburn
SR6 7EX

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: South Tyneside
Dates of inspection: 19th March 2009
Date of last inspection: 14th and 15th March 2006
School's unique reference number: 134512
Headteacher: Paula Williams
Inspector's name and number: John Wilson 99

School context

Whitburn CE School became a Church of England voluntary aided school in 2004. It serves a mainly White British community between Sunderland and South Shields. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school has Maths and Computing specialist school status.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whitburn CE School as a Church of England school are outstanding

Pupils appreciate all aspects of Whitburn CE School and show a great affection for their life there. They achieve very high academic standards and excel in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Whatever their religious or philosophical heritage, they are affirmed and challenged and led to a deeper appreciation of Christian values.

Established strengths

- commitment to inclusion in providing a distinctively Christian service to the local community;
- pupils' outstanding achievements both in their academic and personal development;
- high quality of worship in a variety of contexts

Focus for development

- ensure that religious education is amongst the highest academic attaining subjects;

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

Whitburn CE School takes pride in its Anglican voluntary aided status as is evident from the prominent place it plays in school practice, its environment and documentation. However, the school is fully inclusive, welcoming pupils of all faiths and no faith; there are no religious admissions criteria. Christian values are very strong throughout the school and promote high expectations for academic and personal achievements of all pupils. Everyone feels valued because individuals and groups of pupils are well supported and guided; all make good progress overall and achievement is outstanding. Pupils' spiritual growth is outstanding. They can explain how it is fostered through collective worship and religious education and across the curriculum and other school activities. For example, in Year 8 science, pupils referred to an act of collective worship and considered emotional and moral implications of being involved in a fire, whilst music lessons introduce them to hymns and English lessons enable them to explore deep questions. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is also excellent. Pupils' cultural awareness is strongly promoted through a variety of lessons such as art, religious education, music and geography. Relationships within school are very high quality; staff and pupils treat each other with understanding and respect and consequently behaviour, attendance and involvement are exemplary. Pupils demonstrate high levels of responsibility; they act as peer mentors, pupils' friends, environmental and administrative friends and paired readers. Pupils work within the local parish and with local schools, raise funds for national and global charities and contribute towards improving social,

cultural and environmental qualities of life in South Tyneside. One self-sacrificial example of charity is of the pupil who relinquished all Christmas presents in order to raise funds for an orphanage in Lesotho.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils at Whitburn enjoy and appreciate collective worship and see it as an essential part of what makes the school a church school. The 'Thoughts for the Day' provide a calm, reflective start to mornings and are very effective in developing the open, honest and trusting relationship between pupils and tutor. They contribute strongly to promoting the school family as a community which brings together a wide variety of religious and non-religious beliefs. Worship enables pupils gain a good understanding of the Anglican tradition through the pattern of worship; use of prayer, including the Lord's Prayer; involvement in singing, dance, drama, stillness and reflection; Bible readings and services in church. Worship is well planned and co-ordinated to reflect the Christian year, other school, national and world events and celebrate cross-curricular themes and Christian values underlying school life. These elements, however, are set within the strongly inclusive ethos of fostering respect for other Christian traditions and other religions and beliefs. No one is withdrawn from worship. It contributes very effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development because they engage well and frequently take a leading part in planning, presenting and evaluating worship. Staff and pupils all remark on the 'Lights' worship in Years 7 and 11 as a particularly inspiring act of worship to mark each individual's rite of passage through school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils attain standards around the national average, above the local authority average but lower than the Whitburn average at the ends of both Key Stages 3 and 4. Many girls attain relatively well but boys and less able to middle ability pupils less so. In lessons pupils make good progress; they engage well, enjoy the subject and learn through a wide variety of activities such as research, philosophical thinking, games and mind mapping with good support from ICT, a range of questioning techniques and structured and model answers. Lessons are well planned with good teaching and motivated learning. Pupils judge that teachers provide the right amount of challenge and support; they are aware of their targets and are motivated to do well. Religious education makes a major contribution to pupils' spiritual development because they learn both about religions and also from religion, competently relating beliefs, practices and religious expression to their own experience and beliefs. The subject also strongly promotes the school's Christian character by placing an emphasis on Christian beliefs, teachings and practices from the Anglican tradition, including the Northumbrian saints, and from other Christian perspectives. It contributes well to community cohesion: locally through its links with the parish church, nationally through its teaching of several faiths prominent within Britain and globally through themes such as prejudice, racism, peace and war with examples of teachings and actions of Christians worldwide.

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

The Christian leadership by the Headteacher and Rector is exemplary and ably supported by action and strong encouragement from governors and senior leaders. Over the years the ethos has steadily grown stronger with the increasing involvement of staff and the confidence of the local community. Support from and links with the local church are exemplary. The school leadership is committed to inclusion and serving the community and describes the work as underpinned by Christian values of respect, tolerance, forgiveness and the belief that each individual is created in the image of God. These are summed up in the school motto: 'Excellence for All'. The vast majority of parents are highly supportive of the school's work of promoting very high academic achievements and the well-being of pupils. The senior leadership team has provided very good support and been prominent in improving the status and practice of the religious education department. Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding, due in part to the rigorous quality standards devised for collective worship. The spiritual development of staff is also taken seriously and planned into a number of school activities, with care taken to enable a variety of responses. Whilst being outstanding, Whitburn CE School has the capacity to develop its Christian character yet more fully in the context of its community.