

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Newton Solney Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School

Trent Lane, Newton Solney, Derbyshire DE15 0SF	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Derbyshire
Date of inspection	10 July 2017
Date of last inspection	May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Infant 112890
Headteacher	Heidi Elks
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Currently there are 61 pupils on roll in this small and very popular rural infant school. Almost all the pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language is below the national average. The headteacher is also the religious education [RE] subject leader. There are close links with the nearby St Mary's Church and with a local farmer who provides space for Forest School for the pupils.

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

- This is a welcoming and nurturing Christian family community where young pupils grow in confidence and achieve well. This provides a firm foundation for the next stage of their learning.
- Strong leadership and good governance ensures the Christian vision and values are firmly embedded in all school life.
- The excellent partnership between church and school enriches the worshipping life of the school. As a result, pupils have a good knowledge of the life of Jesus and can explain the significance of the church year in their own words very well.

Areas to improve

- Extend the programme of visits and visitors so pupils meet people of faith more frequently to nurture their spiritual and cultural development.
- Enrich the monitoring and assessment of RE so the regular gathering of evidence from Reception to Year 2 informs pupil progress and the quality of teaching and learning in RE, enabling good practice to be shared.

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

Newton Solney's strong Christian foundation helps its young pupils to fly high and to use the 'Do Be's of being kind, polite, respectful, friendly and responsible. These were chosen by the pupils are well embedded in the school, with the whole community using these values seen in Jesus' teaching as a guide and focus for their direction. Pupils are encouraged to bring in flying high achievements from home which are celebrated with the whole community. All achievement is valued and furthermore encouraged through a range of clubs and extra-curricular activities which parents find amazing in such a small school. Attendance is good and exclusions are very rare as the school values every single child. At Newton Solney everyone experiences the normality of God in school life, which many parents see as 'vital'. Consequently, God is talked about in the same way as one might talk about mathematics. This is attributed to 'measuring the invaluable and valuing the immeasurable' and is an integral part of the normality of living out the Christian faith. These young pupils make very good progress from their starting points in this nurturing environment and they are prepared to meet the next stage of their learning. Results have been consistently above national averages. Those with special needs are helped to exceed in writing and have also achieved well in mathematics. This is attributed to the way staff support and help pupils to succeed as well as the pupils thriving in smaller classes. Relationships are exemplary at all levels, with older pupils looking out for the younger ones. They learn how to be kind and friendly, with all families, including those from other faith communities affirming the values which they too teach and see modelled at home. Consequently, parents say they really see the difference in their children because the Christian values are taught and lived out in school. They see their children modelling Christian values at home and reminding their parents to live out the 'Do Be's' too. They also note how their children have grown in confidence, speaking in front of their classmates and others. They value that each child is known by every member of staff. Collective worship and RE make very good contributions to pupils' SMSC development. In addition, these young pupils have an awareness that Christians and people of all faiths worship in many different places. Visits take place to the Cathedral and the gurdwara. There is a focus on Christianity, as one might expect in a church school, with RE taught weekly, linking well to learning in other areas. For example, as part of thinking about Easter around the world, a coconut from Fiji reminds pupils that at Easter Fijians reflect on Jesus being encircled. There are links with schools in India and Derby which helps support pupils' global awareness as well as their experiences of communities and cultures which are different to their own. Judaism and Sikhism are also studied. Whilst this takes place, pupils say they would like to meet people of all faiths, including Christians from diverse backgrounds. The school has correctly identified this as an area for development. Parents speak highly of this infant school which 'punches above its weight' in terms of what it offers their children. For example, a local farmer provides a Forest School for younger pupils in his field so pupils can reflect amidst the beauty of God's creation on their doorstep. Older pupils enjoy their Forest School area within the school grounds. In these ways, pupils can find quiet spaces to reflect which nurtures their spiritual journeys.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Inspiring and engaging collective worship is an integral part of school life and enjoyed by pupils and adults alike. Worship is seen as a coming together to praise God and learn about the world. There are close links with the church and their vicar. Church services at key times in the year, such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter are well attended and supported by parents. A service of Holy Communion was introduced in July 2016 and is now successfully part of the Harvest and Easter services. Some pupils say they particularly enjoy these services and can explain the symbolism of the bread and wine. A community service takes place in school once a month, which parents attend, as well as a monthly church service. Prayer is an important part of daily life with well-used prayer areas in each class. Pupils say they 'like prayers as we can talk to Jesus and God'. Pupils' prayer bags contain their own prayers and are brought to whole school worship where they are shared and later gathered into a whole school book of prayers and reflections. Anglican responses are used in whole school worship, with collective worship also supporting pupils' understanding of Christian values. Some pupils know the candle welcomes everyone into the community and helps them to

be calm and think of others around the world. With the cross, candle and Bible a focus in worship, Bible stories and reflection are also an important part of worship, with pupils having a good understanding of Bible stories. For example pupils can relate how the healing of the paralysed man shows how four friends working together helped bring him to Jesus so a miracle could take place. Some pupils say that, 'when we do the Trinity' is their most important aspect of worship. Trinity has been a focus for the last year. A Trinity week held this year as well as worship means that pupils are growing in their understanding of the Christian belief in a Trinitarian God. They explain in their own words about their headteacher wearing three favourite hats, a 'Swallows and Amazons hat, a winter and summer hat, but still one person.' These are displayed in the hall to remind them. Moreover, they readily articulate that a three coloured ribbon on the cross in the hall, depicts green to show God the Father's creation, red to symbolise Jesus' blood and white to symbolise The Holy Spirit. They go on to say, that, 'God the Father sent God the Son down to watch the world for him. Jesus was born. The Holy Spirit came down to look after everybody and they could speak in different languages.' Currently, pupils do not plan worship, but choose hymns with their headteacher. Pupil voice is evaluated by governors when they drop in to school, rather than on a formal basis. Pupils say they would like to plan and lead worship more frequently, which the school recognises.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Newton Solney's pupils enjoy RE and are making good progress from their starting points. They talk about beliefs with confidence and say they are 'doing really good' work in RE. The headteacher leads RE, ensuring it has a high profile in school. She teaches RE in Year 2 and carries out book scrutinies and regular drop-ins as well as one formal lesson observation a year. RE is on a two year rolling programme, with a strong focus on Christmas and Easter and an annual RE day. Pupils are both excited and challenged by RE and achieve well in RE, with a good understanding of Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism. For example, they talk enthusiastically about Diwali and Shabbat. A focus on Easter, with pupils working with their vicar and acting out the events of Holy Week, such as portraying Jesus' disciples lying down in the Garden of Gethsemane, was a memorable time for all. Pupils can explain how 'when Jesus came back to life, it was a miracle'. One pupil commented, 'The Holy Spirit is all around us, behind that window, inside me'. They speak with knowledge of the 'cloud' of Ascension and explain the significance of Ascension as 'Christmas backwards' and know Pentecost is when the 'Holy Spirit came down'. Not only can they relate the birth and boyhood of Jesus in great detail, but in speaking about the resurrection appearances, they know that Peter was named 'Rock' by Jesus. Consequently, RE makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The impact of new resources, such as 'Understanding Christianity' is also making a difference. Teaching is of a high standard. For example, Year 1 pupils write prayers in baskets as they reflect on how God held up Moses as a baby and how he became an inspirational leader. Lighting a candle and saying The Grace together always concludes their lessons. Year 2 pupils study Desmond Tutu as an inspirational person and reflect on God's heart. One pupil commented, 'when you put God's heart and your heart together, you have all of God's heart.' Another pupil explained, 'the wind from God's love pushes God's heart around the galaxy' whilst another saw 'Jesus and God's heart' in his. Pupils say they like learning about 'someone else's holy book' and would like to meet people of faith more frequently and 'see what they actually look like'. The school acknowledges this as an area for development.

A new way of assessing has been trialled this year showing even the more able pupils are exceeding in their progress and achievement. The school has already identified embedding the monitoring and assessment of RE by gathering evidence across all age groups and sharing good practice, including new resources.

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

The school's vision and 'Do Be's' underpin all school policy and practice. Church school status drives all areas of school improvement. This includes the leadership and management of RE, with RE on the School Improvement Plan and the headteacher taking the lead. This ensures RE and worship both meet statutory requirements. Governors are committed to the wellbeing of the whole community and take their monitoring role seriously, with the teaching and learning committee meeting before every full governing body meeting. They acknowledge they can always do more monitoring of RE books and lessons.

Governors support staff development and training to help them fulfil their roles and responsibilities. This extends beyond the headteacher and senior teacher. Newly qualified staff cite they have received 'so much support and learned so much from everyone'. Staff speak of the 'love and compassion' they find here as well as the values which help to create a calm and friendly ethos, where they feel cared and loved. Some go on to say this is, for them, the 'best pupil-focussed education and it is a delight to come to work every day' Links with the diocese are supportive and the school has benefitted from diocesan training, such as the recent 'Understanding Christianity' course. . Community links are strong, with a banner designed with pupils and adults proudly displayed in the church. Pupils are inspired to action for others, such as one having her hair chopped for charity. Parents immensely value a church school education for their children and would very much like this to continue. They speak highly of the school, saying they love how the 'move up' days help transition. They also speak of the way their children read their Bibles as favourite books at home and write prayers at home having heard Bible stories in school. Above all, the church foundation is very important to all.

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