

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Warkworth Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Guildens Road
Warkworth
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE65 OTJ

Diocese:	Newcastle
Local authority:	Northumberland
Dates of inspection:	30 th June 2010
Date of last inspection:	19 th October 2006
School's unique reference number:	122301
Headteacher:	Mrs J Carrick
Inspector's name and number:	Mr D Johnson shadowed by Brian Hedley 619

School context

Warkworth First School is a small school of 70 pupils; it serves a village community and its surrounding area. The school was undergoing building work during the inspection to provide two new classrooms which are eagerly awaited.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Warkworth as a Church of England school are outstanding.

This popular school is held in very high regard by all stakeholders. It is characterised by strong and caring relationships and a holistic approach to learning. The leadership of the school is relentless in seeking excellence. Learners receive outstanding care and support and are encouraged to fulfil their potential in an inclusive environment based on explicit Christian values. Since the last inspection all the areas identified for development have been addressed.

Established strengths

- Welcoming, inclusive, nurturing environment based on explicit Christian values.
- Strong, very positive leadership by Headteacher and Governors.
- Strong Christian role modelling by adults
- Excellent links between school, church and local community, offering an enriched curriculum.
- Use of the whole school environment to promote spiritual development.

Focus for development

- Develop formal monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship to include all stakeholders.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan and lead school worship.

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

The outstanding distinctive Christian ethos of this school shines through in its daily life and clearly underpins relationships at all levels. The needs of all learners are met in the widest sense. Children are motivated as individuals and secure in their place within the school family. Values from the school's 'value tree' are evident in children's positive behaviour towards each other and in their relationships with adults. Children speak enthusiastically about the way adults care for them and for the opportunities they provide. One child said "When I leave this school I will miss everything about it – the people and the things that we do." Parents are highly supportive of the ethos and speak positively about their relationship with the school. One parent commented "There is an atmosphere of respect and self-respect". Learners achieve well from a range of starting points and are enthusiastic about their work. Children speak readily about their enjoyment of lessons, which are purposeful, imaginative and enhanced by valuable educational visits. The integrating of the Forest School into the curriculum has added a further dimension where care of the living world, respect, co-operation and self esteem are but a few of the values it helps to develop. The school community

is very much aware of the needs of others both at home and further afield. For example the children were able to talk about their care and responsibilities for local traveller children, for an African child, and the things they have done practically to support them. Parents and children value the many visible changes that have been made to the school environment and grounds, including the eagerly awaited new extension. The school garden is seen as a very special place with prayer stones and a cross made from driftwood. It provides a space for quiet reflection and time to appreciate the beauty of God's creation.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is of vital importance in the life of the school and is a fundamental aspect of its Christian character. It provides a secure centre to the day and helps to create a context for spiritual development. There are a range of worship spaces throughout the school which include quiet reflection areas within the classrooms, reception area and the grounds, as well as a prayer tree; these were being used quite naturally during the inspection. Good use is made of wall displays, religious symbolic items such as the cross and a lighted candle to indicate that this space and time is special. Learners are attentive and keen to participate when invited. During the inspection, worship was based on the theme 'Northern Saints - St Cuthbert'; all children were engaged, listened attentively and joined in a question and answer session with enthusiasm. Children do see the importance of worship and all that it offers. However, there needs to be more opportunities for them to plan and lead worship. The vicar and other foundation governors support the school well, both in leading and attending worship, and in the worship which takes place in church. A weekly 'celebration' service is well supported by families: one parent said "It's the highlight of the week for me, I wouldn't miss it". Although the planning team does an excellent job in shaping worship they need to develop a more structured evaluation process to review the experience that is provided.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

By her excellent leadership, the co-ordinator has ensured that RE makes a significant contribution to the distinctive ethos of the school. Assessment data shows that pupils make excellent progress in the subject. The Scheme of Work, planning, and marking procedures, along with the new assessment tracking system, are used consistently and effectively by teachers in all year groups. Pupils are challenged to achieve a high standard. Lessons are exciting and allow children time to reflect on their own beliefs and to share with others. There is effective teaching about other religions and pupils can discuss the importance of learning about different faiths and cultures. From when they start in Reception, time is allocated to developing children's skills in reflection; they are able to make excellent use of the many displays around school which invite their thoughts and opinions. Their work is greatly enhanced by art and cross-curricular links. The quality of teaching is good and often outstanding because the staff are always willing to embrace new ideas that improve learning. Care is taken to ensure that the RE is linked to the transfer school curriculum so that children are able to build on their knowledge and understanding.

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

The Headteacher and hard-working, well informed governors, confidently articulate a clear vision based on explicit Christian values which are at the heart of the school. A clear sense of purpose for continued improvement together with effective and rigorous evaluation ensures that children have every opportunity to reach their full potential. The helpful and enthusiastic staff team, create an extremely supportive, caring school. Exemplary links between church and school are spoken highly of and valued by all stakeholders. Distributed leadership is fundamental to creating ownership and giving opportunities to develop leadership potential, innovation, and collaboration. This allows skills and expertise to be utilised to best advantage. As a result staff feel that they are able to lead significant whole school projects and organise their own ways of working, allowing change to be sustained and maintained. Professional development, often involving role-modelling, is strongly encouraged and supported, enabling everyone's skills and confidence to be developed and improved as well as helping to achieve work life balance. The school has an excellent relationship with parents. They speak highly of the achievements and well-being of their children, and of their complete satisfaction with the partnership created between home and school. The outstanding nature of this school is perhaps encapsulated by one parent who said, "The school is developing lifelong learners; everyone's equal, respected and loved".