



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **St Anne's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary**

Warwick Road,  
Bishop Auckland,  
DL146LS

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Outstanding

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** Durham

Local authority: Durham

Dates of inspection: June 29<sup>th</sup> 2015

Date of last inspection: July 15<sup>th</sup> 2010

School's unique reference number: 114220

Headteacher: Lynne Sixsmith

Inspector's name and number: Mike Falcus (694)

#### **School context**

St Anne's is a smaller than average primary school situated in the South-West Durham market town of Bishop Auckland. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is below average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of white British background. The head teacher has been in post for two years.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Anne's as a Church of England school are outstanding**

- The central, shared Christian vision which permeates all areas of the school underpins learners' high achievement and exceptional behaviour
- The inspirational leadership and fervent commitment of the head teacher, supported by an effective governing body, drives the strategic direction of St Anne's as a Church school
- The role of the school chaplain who is the catalyst for outstanding worship and invaluable pastoral support results in excellent relationships and enriched spirituality across the whole community
- The extremely high status afforded to RE enhances the school's Christian distinctiveness and contributes significantly to children's outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development

### **Areas to improve**

- Develop pupils' understanding of global citizenship to increase their awareness of Christianity as a world-wide faith
- Extend governors involvement in formally evaluating the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in RE to fully establish it as a core subject and strengthen further its contribution to the school's Christian identity

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

Christian values are truly the 'DNA' which threads through and underpins the vision of St Anne's. This impacts greatly on pupils' wellbeing and academic achievement. All stakeholders are able to articulate the values outlined in the school mission statement, particularly the central importance of love and forgiveness. Pupils were also able to describe the impact of justice and wisdom, 'It helps everyone to be happy, caring and to have fun.' Parents understand the link between Christian character and achievement. Explaining the strap line from the Vision Statement, 'minds to learn-hearts to care,' one explained, 'learning is the base but values are just as important.' Most children enter school at expected levels of attainment but make very good progress over time, consistently achieving above national averages by the end of year six. Vulnerable pupils and those from disadvantaged groups are particularly well-supported and attain in line with their peers. The wellbeing across the school is excellent. Parents appreciate the wonderful love and care from the head teacher and her staff because 'they nurture the children from the moment they walk through the door.' A rich curriculum and opportunities afforded by the extensive nine pupil voice groups challenge children and hugely increase their personal development. The school's Christian values, explicit in RE and worship but seen across the curriculum, nourish and strengthen children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development (SMSC). The chaplain, supported by an active foundation governor, champion and carefully monitor SMSC provision across the school; it is a central focus in the school development plan. Children are impeccably behaved. The transition co-ordinator from the local Catholic college commented, 'pupils are wonderful...St Anne's pupils who come to us have no problem understanding our gospel values.' The atmosphere of 'loving, mutual support' results in excellent relationships across the school. Pupil and staff morale is extremely strong. For example, the recent SMSC audit conducted by a foundation governor reported that governors and staff 'are an extremely cohesive team.' Relationships between all staff epitomise the school's Christian values; the RE co-ordinator said, 'we're like a family.' The status and teaching of RE makes a huge contribution to St Anne's Christian identity. Parents acknowledge its impact saying, 'it embeds values and morals and puts it together in a Christian context.' Curriculum planning is comprehensive. Marking is affirmative and responsive to pupils' needs. The standards and presentation seen in books are first-rate. There are RE areas in each class and a comprehensive school portfolio of pupils' experiences. Moreover, the subject is robustly monitored and evaluated by a very effective co-ordinator. Children recognise the part played by RE in helping them to understand Christianity and other faiths. 'We learn stories from the Bible and about Jesus' said one, and others spoke enthusiastically about their visits to the Hindu temple and Buddhist Centre. The school acknowledges that extending children's understanding of global citizenship is an area for further development.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is inclusive, inspirational and central to the day-to-day life of the school. The catalyst and driving force is the chaplain who co-ordinates both worship and SMSC, 'worship is

everything we do not just in class.' It is explicitly Christian and very well planned and organised using the Leicestershire Scheme, 'Together at Worship.' Children are invigorated and enthused by worship. All said how much they enjoyed it, particularly the singing, games, prayers and participation, 'the chaplain makes it fun so everyone gets the message.' On inspection day a very successful collective worship about 'friendship' was enjoyed by the whole school. It included excellent singing, laughter, rapport with adults and children and time for prayer and reflection using Biblical material. Discussion with pupils afterwards and the school's own records and evaluations demonstrate that high-quality worship is the norm. Learners have a thorough understanding of the Bible, Jesus' teachings and the Trinity. Reflecting on the parable of the 'Lost Son' a child stated, 'you can do something wrong and still be welcomed back.' Another, in response to my question about the Trinity, explained that the lighting of the three candles at the start of worship represents the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. St Anne's is a prayerful community. Children understand the power and comfort of prayer. 'It makes me different,' remarked one, 'it helps me to think when I'm arguing with my sister', said another. Opportunities for prayer abound. For example, morning and evening prayers, the 'prayer stop' in the hall, reflection areas in every classroom and especially the Prayer Garden. Moreover, with the help of the chaplain, children have 'published' prayers for parents from their 'Prayer Places' day and have provided ones for use in St Andrew's church. The chaplain plays a pivotal role in supporting the school community e.g. providing individual pastoral support and comfort to a pupil who had lost a parent. There is a valuable link with the parish and church of St Andrew's which assists pupils in understanding Anglican practice. Celebrations are held in church at key times in the Christian calendar alongside special events e.g. the recent 'ISingPop.' The work of the chaplain and the involvement of a parishioner/foundation governor have maintained church-school links. However, the practical problems of distance to St Andrew's church and the ill health of the incumbent have curtailed the parish-school connections in recent times.

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

The inspirational leadership of the head teacher, aided by the tireless work of key members of her team, promotes a vision of St Anne's rooted in distinctively Christian values. They are supported by a very active and knowledgeable governing body who are aware of their obligation to challenge the leadership. Strategic planning appropriately takes account of the church school ethos; every issue in the school development plan is linked to a Christian value and SMSC enjoys its own discrete section. The National Society self-evaluation toolkit, drawn up by the head teacher with the help of staff and governors, is the principal mechanism for evaluating the St Anne's church-school effectiveness. It is comprehensive and accurate. Although unnecessary as a voluntary controlled school, the leadership completed the RE section; this demonstrates the high importance given to the subject and a commitment to keep the subject high on the agenda. All stakeholders were involved in formulating the Vision Statement which outlines the school's ten core Christian values. Moreover, results from questionnaires to parents regarding the school's church-school distinctiveness demonstrate that they overwhelmingly recognise the effectiveness of St Anne's as a church school. The head teacher and governors are astute in giving the leadership of RE and worship such a high priority. The appointment of the school chaplain was a bold and imaginative decision. It has contributed significantly to the outstanding quality and effectiveness of both worship and SMSC. Governors are highly involved in evaluating worship e.g. a foundation member regularly evaluates and feeds back to staff and governors. Such strategies do extend to RE e.g. a work scrutiny carried out by the coordinator and a foundation governor (who is an RE teacher). However, there is scope for governors to undertake more formal procedures for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in RE. The school is aware of the issue of the future leadership of church schools. For instance, there has been training for governors and staff led by the Assistant Diocesan Director and the deputy head is undertaking a church school leaders' qualification. The school has fully addressed key issues from the last inspection. The website evidences the numerous community events and initiatives which enrich pupils' experiences. The link with local Christian churches, particularly St

Andrew's, is a strength and greatly appreciated by parents, 'it brings everyone together.'  
However, given the forthcoming retirement of the incumbent and likely interregnum, the leadership faces a challenge to explore further opportunities for effective church-school links.

SIAMS report June 2015 St Anne's Voluntary Controlled C of E Primary, Bishop Auckland DLI46LS