

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Newtown Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Newtown, Wem, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 5NU

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| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | Lichfield |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Good |
| Name of federation | The Newhampton CE Schools Federation |
| Date of inspection | 16 February 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | January 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | 123490 |
| Executive headteacher | Andrew Hodson |
| Inspector's name and number | Lizzie McWhirter 244 |

School context

Currently there are 153 pupils on roll in this rural school, with 17 part time in the nursery. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is average. In May 2016 the school federated with Welshampton Voluntary Controlled Primary School to form the Newhampton CE Schools Federation. The four current foundation governors took up their posts in May 2016. The executive headteacher works across the two schools. There are close links with the parish church of King Charles the Martyr, whose vicar was appointed since the last inspection. The RE and worship leader has been appointed since the previous inspection.

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

- The excellent pastoral care is indicative of the outstanding educational provision and concern for the individual within this inclusive and welcoming Christian community.
- The partnership between the church and school, through the priest-in-charge, ensures a pattern of high quality reverent and prayerful collective worship which nurtures pupils' spiritual lives.
- Strong leadership and governance ensures the school's Christian vision and values are integral to the federation's strategic wheel of learning, with pupils and their families at its hub.

Areas to improve

- For the governors to extend the monitoring of RE, as an important aspect of distinctive Christian character. This ensures it is consistent, regular and robust and supports the new RE subject leader in her role.
- Enrich the programme of visits and visitors to enable pupils to meet people of other faiths more frequently. This ensures pupils understand more deeply the religion and beliefs of others and helps them make the connection between faith and life, thus nurturing their spiritual and cultural development.

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

Undoubtedly, Newtown's Christian character is exemplified in the excellent pastoral care extended to all in its concern for the individual within this inclusive and welcoming Christian community. This is because its core vision and purpose is focused on RAISE; namely respect, achieve, independence, self-esteem and excellence. This is rooted in its mission of 'growing and learning through the love of God to nurture and develop global citizens'. This symbolises the Christian education pupils receive, which prepares them for life beyond Newtown. In addition, the whole community lives out its chosen core values of respect, responsibility, trust, fairness and consideration for others. Consequently, relationships, behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. For example, pupils show impeccable manners and stand aside in corridors, saying, 'You are welcome' and 'After you' when they meet parents or governors or any member of the school community. Pupil progress and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is at or above the national average across all year groups. Newtown has consistently been in the top 20% schools nationally for the last 5 years. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of their tailored programmes of support within a spirit of trust. The school attributes its high academic results to the school's Christian character and vision, where 'each day is a new day.' The school has a good reputation locally for successful integration in placing pupils who may have been excluded from their schools. The school also supports needy families. As a result, the school numbers are growing, with pupils proud of their achievements. This extends to music and sport and other extra-curricular activities which enrich pupils' lives. An excellent example is the medics club. As one parent commented, 'in a rural area, everyone needs a bit of know-how.' In addition, the pupil health and safety committee and the litter patrol were recently involved in a 'Big Tidy Up' of the school and church grounds. In this rural area, pupils are very aware of their closeness to God's creation in the surrounding countryside and their responsibility to help care for it. Biblical teaching, collective worship and RE make very good contributions to the school's Christian character and to pupils' personal and spiritual development. Termly culture days help extend pupils' global awareness of the world they live in and the diverse communities and cultures which exist. However, pupils welcome, and the school acknowledges, the need for pupils to meet people of faith more frequently. This enables pupils to make connections between faith and life. Pupils say they are challenged by RE, but enjoy learning about Christianity and other faiths such as Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and Sikhism, saying, 'we like learning what they pray about.' Pupils discuss and ask important questions about heaven, life and death. Pupils' knowledge of the Christian story is very good, as one might expect in a church school. For example, they speak of Ascension-tide as Jesus going back to heaven as 'his work on earth was done'. Pupils visit their parish church, King Charles the Martyr regularly. In addition, they celebrated Christingle at nearby Loppington Church. Some pupils attended Open Door at Shrewsbury Abbey whilst other pupils visited Westminster Abbey whilst on a trip to London. This helps enrich their understanding of Christianity in a wider context. The school is looking forward to developing links with Kenya through the federation partnership and maintaining its links with Uganda to extend pupils' understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Reverent and prayerful collective worship which nurtures the whole school community is a hallmark of Newtown's daily pattern and enshrined in its worshipping life. This is because the priest-in-charge, appointed since the last inspection, has helped transform the liturgy so it absorbs and engages pupils and adults alike. The chosen themes enrich the spiritual journeys of everyone. As a result, worship is joyous and pupils are attentive, responding thoughtfully. They experience aspects of Anglican worship and distinctiveness, such as words of response in greetings and dismissal. They are actively involved in leading aspects of worship, such as choosing the song and have become more confident in reading their own prayers. Pupils and adults share the peace together and the school prayer or Lord's Prayer is always prayed. Following pupil surveys, house captains are now responsible for preparing worship. The school's worship box provides reminders of themes to apply to everyday life. For example, different kinds of love, such as the brotherly love shown by the Olympian Brownlee brothers in putting each other first. School council

discussions as well as the surveys provide a useful evaluative tool to inform future planning. Moreover, pupils say the most important part of worship is 'talking to God'. They feel comfortable in their parish church of King Charles the Martyr, one of only three churches in the country with this dedication. Pupils value its history and say they 'feel welcome in God's house'. The parish church is used for school plays and key festivals throughout the church year. It can accommodate parents and grandparents and brings the worshipping community together. Pupils experience worship led by a variety of leaders, including the local Baptist minister. Pupils can explain the mystery of The Holy Trinity in their own words as the preparation for worship always welcomes and acknowledges God as Father, Son and Spirit. Hence pupils speak about 'learning about God as one thing but also three different things. When we light the candles it shows that God is there as Jesus, the light of the world'. One Key Stage 2 pupil described God as 'like a box of Lego; you can make three different things out of the same pieces.' Pupils talk enthusiastically about their encounter of Jesus' teaching and example, and apply it to their own lives. For example, they find the stories of Jesus and the miracles he performed 'fascinating and interesting'. For them, the story of Jesus and the tax collector 'shows the good in everyone' and the fact that 'Jesus did not just hang around with the good guys'. Many governors, not just the foundation governors, are regularly involved in the termly on-going evaluation of worship by the curriculum committee to continually enhance the worship experience of the whole community.

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

Strong leadership and governance is rooted in the mutual and substantial partnership between church and school. This ensures that the school's Christian vision and values infiltrate every part of the curriculum and are integral to the federations' strategic wheel of learning. Governors systematically revisit the mission statement each year and it is embedded into the strategy and integral to its existence as petals to a flower. Whilst Newtown importantly retains its own uniqueness and identity, it is stronger because it shares excellent leadership, in its headteacher, priest-in-charge and foundation governors who are all dedicated to the life and work of this school. This vibrant and inclusive school is committed to the wellbeing and advancement of all. Consequently, pupils and adults, including staff, thrive in this school and achieve highly. Links with the diocese have always been good. This includes leadership roles and responsibilities. For example the RE subject leader is newly in post, but has already been on diocesan training to support the teaching of Christianity. The school acknowledges the importance of supporting her in her role. They recognise the need to ensure RE is consistently and robustly monitored by governors to inform the future development of this important aspect of Christian distinctiveness. In turn, everyone embraces the school's ethos, which is modelled by adults and pupils alike. For example, parents cite older pupils in their compassion and care towards younger pupils. They praise the fact that, 'nobody is excluded because of their background and all are part of the school family.' The attention to the individual needs of pupils improves every aspect of their education, including their academic and personal development. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their steps beyond Newtown and go forward as confident adults. Parents feel partners in their children's education because they are well informed by termly newsletters. They also speak highly of the priest-in-charge. A highlight was the Remembrance service at King Charles the Martyr when everyone, including staff made their own poppy, symbolic of being part of a wider community. Staff praise 'the families who support the school in so many ways'. Staff speak of Newtown school as their 'inspiration and their life', as their 'extended family' and a 'home away from home'. Staff also speak of Newtown as 'a wonderful place to grow, surrounded by love, friendship and happiness'. They count it as a privilege to work here, in a spirit of warmth and laughter, where they are all passionate about providing the children with the best learning experiences they can. All areas from the previous inspection have been well addressed. Whilst the governing body is new, it has clear priorities to inform future development. RE and worship have an increasingly high profile and meet statutory requirements, making very good contributions to pupils' spiritual journeys. Community links are good, with the school choir singing at local events and the school featuring regularly in the 'Loppington Village News'.