



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Stanhope Barrington CE Primary

Westcroft

Stanhope

Bishop Auckland

DL13 2NU

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Satisfactory

**Current inspection grade:** Outstanding

**Diocese:** Durham

Local authority: Durham

Dates of inspection: 23 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 20 June 2013

School's unique reference number: 114217

Headteacher: Shaun Myers

Inspector's name and number: David Taylor

Quality assurance: Lyn Field 151

### School context

Stanhope Barrington Church of England School is a rural primary school located in the North Pennines. It has 105 pupils with a further 30 in the nursery from a wide range of socio-economic background and predominantly White British. Children enter the nursery well below national expectations, a significant number having learning or behavioural difficulties. 18% of pupils are on the gifted and talented register in the primary school. The current headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2013. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have some teaching allocation to cover a long term staff absence.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stanhope Barrington as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong Christian ethos of the school is lived and breathed by members of the school community and beyond. This impacts directly and positively on the quality of pastoral and academic provision leading to an improvement of standards and a nurturing, caring community atmosphere.
- Through the strong leadership, rooted in Christian values, of the headteacher and deputy headteacher the school has made substantial progress since its last SIAMS inspection. This has not only significantly raised the profile of the Christian character of the school, but it has led to enrichment and improvement of the delivery of collective worship.
- Links with the local churches and the wider community are of substantial mutual benefit. Not only do they enrich pupils' understanding of Christianity and enhance their learning of Christianity and other faiths, they also play a highly valued role in the local community bringing people together in worship and in community activities.

### Areas to improve

- Ensure that collective worship plans make specific reference to biblical teaching and the Christian calendar. This is to enable pupils to gain a deeper understanding of the key celebrations and events that are important to the Christian faith.
- Provide areas on site to facilitate and raise the profile of private prayer and reflection.

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

Christian values and a distinctively Christian ethos are central to the life of the school community. Staff, pupils and governors readily articulate ways in which these relate to their lives. 'Forgiveness' is demonstrated when addressing bullying. The direct link is made with 'Forgive others as God forgave you'. This supports pupils in the process of understanding the meaning and practice of forgiveness. 'Trust' is given context in the warm and open interactions between teachers, pupils and the wider school community. This modelling of trusting behaviour is derived directly from the strong Christian ethos of the school. It assists pupils in building trust in others as part of the nurturing school environment. 'Service' is seen in the charitable activities of the school such as the Christian Aid food bank. A pupil's comment 'If it wasn't a Christian school we might not want to do that' exemplifies the profile of the Christian distinctiveness. Moving testaments of support given through kind words and prayer in difficult times, further illustrates this. The well embedded Christian ethos enables pupils to flourish and as a consequence attain well. Progress is outstanding by the end of Key Stage 2 from their starting points. The physical environment of the school reflects the Christian faith in its display work, for example in its entrance mural of Christian symbols. This mural, designed by a school governor creates an opportunity for pupils to explore and research the meanings of the symbols. This in turn enhances their understanding of the Christian faith and complements lessons from religious education (RE) and collective worship. Children are excited in verbalising how the value and ethos make a real difference to them. 'Friendship' for example is linked to the story of Jesus as the good shepherd. A typical pupil's comment was 'The shepherd is like God and the sheep are like pupils'). Pupils state emphatically that RE lessons are important and enjoyable, because as one pupil explained 'they help you understand more about Christianity'. Another pupil said 'I like discovering the moral of the story'. The close links with church and the clergy have a positive effect on pastoral care: for example a pupil who may otherwise have been excluded was supported directly through the church enabling him to stay within the school community. There is a strong acknowledgement of the need to give pupils the understanding of other faiths and cultures. This is within the context of the school's and village's almost exclusively White British demographic. Pupils are taught about and explore other faiths and cultures through RE, assemblies and visitors. As a consequence they have a respect for and understanding of other faiths and believers. Examples of such opportunities include a visit to a mosque and RE lessons. A pupil's comment, 'It makes us understand people of other faiths differently', exemplifies this. Pupils engage and value a range of experiences in RE, collective worship, assemblies and church services. These experiences develop pupils' and staff's own spirituality based on the Christian faith.

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

It is clear that collective worship is greatly valued and woven into the fabric of school life and the local community. Planning of worship involves staff, clergy, pupils, visitors and governors, and is built around the school terms to give a long term overview. Pupils are able to enjoy and take an active part in collective worship. Examples include the annual outdoor Remembrance Service and Easter Service held at St Thomas' Church. Governors and staff make direct reference to how they are moved spiritually by pupils' own prayers at such events. The pupil voice is strong in the evaluation and shaping of collective worship provision. For example, a whole-school survey was designed by and completed by pupils. This led directly to an extensive school improvement plan, including for example the increase in numbers of visiting speakers. This in turn led to a significant improvement on the impact of collective worship in delivering the Christian message. Highly engaging, interactive and inclusive collective worship resonates in the lives of pupils. A parent's comment, 'The children are excited now about going to church. They are keen to share the Christian message when they get home', is typical. Collective worship experiences develop the personal spirituality of pupils and staff. Pupils clearly see the value of public prayer and reflection. The prayer tree in the assembly hall allows

pupils to write and display their own prayers. These prayers demonstrate a development of personal spirituality and show an understanding of Christian teachings including the Holy Trinity. Examples include, 'as I reflect on my life let me know Hope' and 'Dear God I simply want to say thank you for what I have'. Collective worship makes a significant impact on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development through enhanced interaction with local churches and clergy. The lessons and assemblies delivered by the local Methodist minister and other clergy and visitors lead to pupils further exploring Christianity outside of school. An example is the 'Messy Church' club at the local Methodist church, which in turn helps improve community cohesion. Since the last inspection there has been considerable improvement in links with the local community and churches. This enriches the experience of pupils, as well as increasing attendance to local churches as parents engage with worship alongside their children. Parents speak of their children being 'excited about going to Church'. They comment 'the Church is now packed', with reference to school assemblies held at St Thomas Church. The positive impact of collective worship travels home with pupils, for example when a child expressed a desire to pray to 'God as Father' on Fathers' Day. The impact of RE and collective worship is clearly evidenced by clergy and governors who are able to contrast their experience of non-Christian schools. It was commented that pupils' 'base level of understanding of the Christian faith is much greater', and that there was 'a greater desire for knowledge around worship'. This was exemplified by Methodist minister being invited into a classroom by pupils around Palm Sunday celebrations. The Palm Sunday story was told and palm crosses given to pupils. This was described as a 'quiet and special experience', by the Methodist minister and is indicative of the warm community spirit of the school. Collective worship is inclusive, based upon biblical stories but making use of pupil and staff experiences to add context and impact. The story of 'Daniel and the Lions' Den', enacted with pupils, is used in the context of doing the right thing in the face of bullying. It is clear that such stories enhance pupils' understanding and the extent to which staff and pupils live by distinctively Christian values.

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

Leaders live out and role model strong Christian values and 'walk the talk' creating an inclusive, nurturing and caring school environment. Their passionate leadership has led to substantial progress in Christian distinctiveness and collective worship since the last inspection in 2013. Systems for planning and monitoring make it clear that this progress can be sustained in future years and areas to improve will be effectively addressed. Governors, parents and staff talk of the significant positive change the strengthening of the church ethos and community links has made over the last three years. Within the context of unforeseen staffing issues this progress is commendable. It is clearly indicative of the high profile given to RE, collective worship and the Christian ethos. Christian text, for example the Lord's Prayer, is used across the curriculum for example in Literacy. This helps to deepen understanding whilst contributing to overall pupil attainment. Letters and comments from the local community demonstrate the impact of the Christian ethos on the behaviour of pupils. Pupils' actions to assist an elderly resident who had fallen crossing a local stream serve as an illustration. This and similar acts are explicitly linked to the school's Christian character. Governors have an active role in the evaluation of provision and this has led to, and continues to ensure, further sustainable improvement. There is an 'open door' to governors for discussion and sharing of ideas. Governors' involvement in lesson observation and work scrutiny has impacted positively on attainment. The 'Links to the Church' section of governing body reports raises levels of accountability and the profile of church links. These links enrich both the community life of the village and the collective worship experiences of the pupils and staff. There is a strong desire and positive action in place to extend church leadership capacity across the locality. This is commendable in view of the small staff. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher support and share practice with local Church of England schools. Plans are in place to train two less experienced staff in the delivery and planning of collective worship to further develop capacity for leadership.