



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

### Lowick Voluntary Controlled First School

30, Main Street

Lowick

TD15 2UA

**Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Newcastle**

Local authority: Northumberland

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Date of last inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010

School's unique reference number: 131221

Headteacher: Christine Vanson

Inspector's name and number: Carole Snelling NS 519

### School context

Lowick voluntary controlled first school is smaller than average with 29 pupils on roll; it also has an early years provision for three year olds. Lowick and Holy Island church schools have worked together in a soft federation that has existed for 25 years. The schools share a headteacher. Children at Lowick work alongside their peers from Holy Island voluntary aided first school for a significant part of each week. The children are of White British origin. Children make more than expected progress and attainment, however, as the numbers are so small annual fluctuations are inevitable.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lowick First School as a Church of England school are good

- The enthusiasm and determination of the headteacher, her team and governing body to ensure that Lowick and Holy Island schools work in federation provides opportunities for children to learn through a stimulating curriculum. As a result children are rounded individuals who are achieving and flourishing.
- The teaching of Jesus "to treat your neighbour as yourself" is evident in the excellent behaviour and caring, supportive relationships.
- Very good curriculum opportunities for social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development ensure that children develop an understanding and tolerance of faiths, cultures and traditions beyond their own communities.
- The ambition and aspiration for each child to fulfil their God given potential results in children making above expected progress and achievement.

### Areas to improve

- Use the SIAMS schedule documentation, to help formalise and structure the evaluation

and celebration of progress and to review the effectiveness and impact of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship.

- Enhance the development of collective worship by ensuring that there is a formal mechanism to allow children and governors to carry out monitoring and evaluation.
- As cited in the Federation Improvement Plan, invest in high-quality training for governors and in on going support for staff delivering religious education and worship in order to enhance the learning experience for pupils.
- Work with stakeholders to enable them to more fully articulate the Christian values that are implicit in the life of the school.

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

The school's aim to provide a happy, caring, family environment where children feel inspired to learn within the Christian context of love and forgiveness is fulfilled. This is a fully inclusive school. Working with children from Holy Island and mixed-age and stage teaching creates opportunities for children to support and learn from each other. This is seen in peer mentoring for reading, tutor time "Welcome" greetings and caring for younger children at break and lunchtime. In doing so they demonstrate their Golden Rule: love of neighbour. The caring relationships are informed by Christian values of love, forgiveness, pursuit of truth, justice and service. The imaginative and stimulating curriculum ensures that children develop the skills of independent learning and it provides development opportunities for SMSC. A moral framework based on Christian values enables children to make decisions and formulate opinions. Pupils are confident, articulate and adept at listening carefully and asking questions. They challenge others' views and accept criticism; consequently learning moves on quickly. They know that they are special and cared for and as a result their behaviour and relationships are excellent. Pupils say they feel happy, safe and know how well they are doing in their learning. Progress of all groups of pupils, including those with special needs and the more able, is good or better. Challenging targets encourage all to aspire. Vibrant and exciting displays of artefacts and children's' work value pupils achievements and scaffold and support learning. Very good opportunities are provided for SMSC, e.g. curriculum visits to York to study the Victorians, to Edinburgh to visit a mosque and European Christmas Market, after school clubs and community involvement. In RE and worship the teaching of world faiths, Christianity and celebrations contribute to an awareness of a multi-faith, multicultural world. The impact of this is the development of tolerance, cultural awareness and a contribution to social cohesion. Learners are beginning to understand that Christianity is a multicultural worldwide faith. Children learn the importance of good stewardship of God's world; this is seen in their regular beach cleans, community lunches at Harvest and Christmas time and charitable fundraising. Pupils are well prepared for the transition to the next phase of their education.

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

Worship plays an important part in the life of the school and pupils participate willingly and thoughtfully. The worship coordinator has produced a schedule of themes that link with the Anglican year, curriculum topics, Bible stories, Christian values and festivals from world religions. Worship takes place on a daily basis and is whole-school; it is seen as a special time in the day. Friday's worship is a celebration of all that children have achieved during the week. This is particularly enjoyed. Worship is mainly Christian in nature, the theological material is linked to pupils' everyday experience and children can often relate teachings to their own behaviour, e.g. they know the importance of forgiveness in the teachings of Jesus. The worship coordinator delivers worship as do visiting clergy and a foundation governor. All staff are present for worship. Links are often made between RE topics and worship e.g. the children looked at Psalm 139 and then reflected upon what made them special during an RE lesson. Children volunteer to prepare and lead worship; they do this with confidence, pride and enjoyment. Two year 4 pupils retold an Old Testament story using Godly Play. Children

listened attentively and were invited to ask questions or give an opinion about the story they had heard. One child concluded that “God loves us and wants to keep us safe”. Over time worship affords opportunities for SMSC, prayer, reflection and celebration through the medium of music, drama and Biblical stories. Extemporaneous prayer is led by the children and worship concludes with the Lord’s prayer. Children would benefit from opportunities to engage in a wider use of prayer to support their spiritual journey. Worship contributes to the SMCS development of children by allowing them time to reflect and raise questions. Pupils are beginning to understand the person of Jesus and the nature of the Trinity. There is evidence of the impact of this in the care children show to all, in their stewardship activities and in their developing spirituality. At Christmas and Easter the children produce a performance that tells the story behind the festival. The Christmas Nativity production takes place at St Mary’s church on Holy Island and is enjoyed by pupils and their families. There is no formal regular and robust system of observation and review of worship. It would enhance the development of worship if regular reviews and evaluation were initiated by all stakeholders.

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

The head, her team and governors of both Lowick and Holy Island schools are fully committed to providing the highest standard of education. Working together they have produced a tightly focused joint federation improvement plan “Journeying Together”. Areas for development are clearly identified. There is a determination that every child should have access to the same educational opportunities and experiences and that rural isolation should not be a disadvantage. The drive for excellence to ensure that each child aspires and achieves is evident in the target setting. From variable starting points it is usual for children to make more than expected progress. Children thrive supported by caring adults in a nurturing atmosphere underpinned by Christian values. Celebration of achievement and praise are freely given and contribute to pupils’ feelings of self-worth. By external evaluation, professional development and partnership with other schools locally, the head is fully informed of local and national developments in education. The head and governors have succeeded in training future leaders by devolved leadership opportunities and involvement in the National College for School Leadership. RE and collective worship play an important part in the school’s curriculum and contribute to SMCS and an understanding of Christianity. RE is taught as a discrete subject and as part of the themed curriculum. The children from Lowick and Holy Island are taught jointly for RE by the coordinator and the island teacher. The improvement plan sets out the intention to improve RE and worship by sourcing professional development training for teachers and governors. The assessment and marking in RE is under development; it does not yet reflect the whole school practice of annotated feedback for pupils’ next steps for learning and improvement. Parents say that school is a community that allows each individual to be themselves. There is a high level of parental satisfaction; they feel that the staff are approachable and friendly and that their children are happy, confident and proud of their school. Governors are keen to be involved in the daily life of the school; they make regular visits and support the head. As a number of governors are relatively new in post the head has identified the need for training in using the SIAMS evaluation framework. A foundation governor is a licensed Reader at St John the Baptist; she is actively working to further develop relationships between church and school. Links with other church communities have also been established. The school holds a number of Quality Marks and has received national recognition for its “Mantle of the Expert” curriculum work. The family atmosphere of this school set against the backdrop of Christian heritage allows each child to be nurtured and supported in their spiritual journey.

The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> January 2016 Lowick VC First Lowick TD15 2UA