

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Wark Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Address	Wark, Hexham, Northumberland, NE48 3LS
How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?	
Overall grade	Good
The impact of collective worship	Good
The effectiveness of religious education (RE)	Good

School's vision
<p>'Growing Well', based on the parable of the mustard seed.</p> <p>Growing well in our community shapes all we do and helps us understand who we are as a school, why we are here, and how we live. From it, we draw our school values.</p>
Key findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The deeply embedded Christian vision is built upon a shared understanding of the school as a committed and invested family. Rooted in the school's life, it supports and encourages pupils and adults to grow well, with love and integrity. The ambitious curriculum effectively meets the needs of learners so that they can flourish. There is a focus on seeing beyond oneself, which enriches opportunities and leads pupils to be 'growing well'. However, there is not a clearly defined understanding of spirituality and spiritual growth. Partnerships and positive relationships are strengths in the school. Dedicated, compassionate leadership empowers strong teamwork, encouraging growth in everyone. Leaders, governors and staff model the importance of the vision to inspire flourishing together. Collective worship is highly valued. It significantly influences the lives of both pupils and staff, enabling them to flourish. It is invitational and inclusive, holding a central role in the life of the school. Worship deepens pupils' understanding of the school's Christian values and 'plants the seed' of the vision. Teaching in religious education (RE) engages pupils in their learning, which they enjoy, and it enriches pupils' understanding of Christianity. However, pupils' knowledge of a range of world faiths, worldviews and connections between different faiths is less well-developed.
Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree an inclusive and shared definition of spirituality so that planned opportunities for spiritual growth and development are present across the whole curriculum. Ensure curriculum planning for RE adds coherence to pupils' experiences and strengthens their knowledge and understanding of a range of faiths and worldviews.

Inspection findings

The flourishing of all within the school creates a sense of loving family galvanised by the shared Christian vision. The parable of the mustard seed unites staff and governors in their vision for everyone to 'grow well'. The school is led with dedication and determination; leaders have a personal and professional commitment to ensure the school thrives. There is a strong sense of purpose, cherishing and love for all.

The school's Christian vision blossomed through collaboration between the school and its community. It holds a special place, serving as a reminder of the positive difference people can encourage in other people's lives. Therefore, it is present, lived out, and drives actions; adults and children know and care that it applies to them. This cohesive vision extends beyond the school, cultivating strong relationships with the parish, local community, and diocese. By nurturing pupils within a broader Christian family, the school increasingly ensures that all can flourish and grow well. With unwavering determination, the school embraces the community. Leaders have ensured that the school reflects its context, as well as thinking and acting beyond it. This is so that the pupils gain an understanding of and can also contribute to life beyond the locality.

Leaders are dedicated to continually improving and providing a range of professional development opportunities to support staff with continued growth. Examples include staff being provided with dedicated time for subject leadership and accessing training from subject experts. As a result, staff feel valued, and their work is invested in. Staff, inspired by the Christian vision, hold high aspirations and serve as role models, resulting in pupils feeling safe, cared for, and flourishing in their learning. Committed and engaged governors make courageous decisions, monitoring progress through a self-evaluation cycle that includes regular visits to the school. Leaders are aware that priorities for development as a church school require a sharp focus as it moves into its next phase.

The school's vision and values drive decisions that shape the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. This results in motivated pupils making progress in their learning. Pupils actively participate in their education and are encouraged to be curious and engaged in their own development. There is a focus on encouraging children to 'act locally and think globally'. This engages children and the community but is not yet fully embedded. Therefore, the impact of this approach is not fully realised. There is carefully targeted provision for those with additional needs or vulnerabilities, and the school considers every child special. Parents recognise the school's commitment to families and the compassionate approach taken to providing support which 'goes beyond education'. They embrace the Christian vision and values, feel part of the school community, and appreciate and benefit from its work. The broad and balanced curriculum includes some opportunities for spiritual development. Staff hold personal experiences of spirituality and look for ways to provide space for children's spiritual growth. However, there is no shared understanding of spirituality or clear plans for its development. Therefore, opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding and experiences of spirituality are limited.

Pupils take pride in their school and are nourished by positive relationships. This instils confidence and promotes cohesion and collective responsibility. Pupils are clear in words and actions that anybody, regardless of difference, is welcome and would be welcomed at Wark. They advocate for fairness and are generous in their support of charities, local and global causes. Pupils are provided with opportunities for leadership; the school council is an example of effective work for change in school. Pupils and adults actively engage in exploring challenges faced in the world, for example, in the environment. However, opportunities for pupils to lead on social action and become courageous advocates are not widely developed.


Throughout the school, behaviour is a strength and defined by respect and care for others, which pupils attribute to the school's shared vision and values. Pupils exhibit high expectations of themselves and their peers, fostering a happy and supportive environment. When misunderstandings or conflicts arise, pupils follow staff examples and work together to resolve them. Pupils understand that time is often needed to resolve conflict. They live by the school's principles of love, friendship, caring, tolerance and cooperation, resulting in strong relationships.

The school's learning environment, including the outside areas, supports personal growth, good mental health and wellbeing. The school's values are displayed, and reflection areas, where pupils share responses to special moments, are actively used in classrooms. Thoughtful decisions about the environment, including those made by pupils, add to the sense of care.

Collective worship is inclusive and thoughtful, emphasising values with daily opportunities for reflection, silence, music, and prayer. Visits from 'Open the Book' bring stories alive, helping pupils to develop their knowledge of and learn from the Bible. Older pupils in the school lead worship and are encouraged to explore the school's values in meaningful and engaging ways. Leaders act on pupils' feedback and make changes to the structure of worship, making it more impactful. The local vicar regularly leads worship, working closely with leaders to plan its rhythm. This fosters a strong link between the school and church, providing opportunities for the school community to come together with families. The school prayer is important to all in school and cements acts of worship. There is an understanding, expressed by children and adults, that 'worship plants the seed that enables us all to grow'. As a result, worship has a significant place and impact on the life of the school.

RE lessons are enjoyable for pupils. The use of drama, art, discussion and creative approaches ensure that learning is engaging. Pupils understand the importance of learning about religion and are particularly knowledgeable about Christianity. They understand the importance of studying a range of faiths. They ask the question, 'how can I know about myself if I don't know about other people?'. The curriculum does not have sufficient time or focus on deepening learning and making links beyond Christianity. Feedback to children does not always help them think deeply or make links between theological concepts. Arrangements for the teaching of RE have been carefully considered, and it is taught with passion and commitment. Leaders are aware that staff must remain skilled and knowledgeable; therefore, the curriculum is reviewed and evaluated by all. Training is provided by the diocese and subject specialists. Consequently, the RE curriculum is understood by staff, and they contribute to its development and the ways in which it is taught. The headteacher shares the leadership of RE, and leaders, including governors, recognise its place as a rigorous academic subject.

Wark CE Primary school is a loving school. People grow as part of a positive family, and the Christian vision speaks to the life of the school. The parable of the mustard seed provides a metaphor for flourishing. Children and adults describe their journey from seed to tree and sometimes to bird as they grow together and 'grow well'.

	The effectiveness of RE is		Good	
	Pupils make good progress in RE through a broad range of planned opportunities, exploring 'Big Questions' and being encouraged to be 'detectives'. Time is given for reflection, sharing and discussion, with teaching and learning adapted for those with special educational needs or disabilities. The newly designed curriculum for RE is not embedded. Therefore, though strong in Christianity, it does not provide enough opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of world faiths, worldviews, and the connections between them.			
Information				
School	Wark Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School		Inspection date	13/03/23
URN	122300		VC/VA/Academy	VA
Diocese	Newcastle		Pupils on roll	54 (Inc Nursery)
Headteacher	Michael Boucetla			
Chair of Governors	Esther Brown			
Inspector	Paul Bowlas		No.	2200