

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Longhorsley St. Helen's Church of England VA First School

Vision

'Love your neighbour as yourself so you can aspire, believe, achieve to be the very best you can be.'

Longhorsley St. Helen's Church of England VA First School is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish. It has the following notable strengths.

Strengths

- The school's Christian vision and associated values are deeply embedded. They drive decisions that enhance the work of this inclusive, nurturing and caring school. All are encouraged to love their neighbour as they aspire to be the best version of themselves.
- School leaders and governors are unwavering in their drive to shape, monitor and maintain a curriculum that enables all learners to flourish. Their commitment to meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is exceptional.
- Planned collaboratively with local church partners, collective worship is inclusive, invitational and inspirational. It offers pupils and adults a daily opportunity to experience spiritual moments of prayer, music and silent reflection.
- A culture of justice and responsibility towards others permeates this school. Leaders foster powerful relationships and support pupils to reflect on their place in society and acknowledge the needs of others.

Development Points

- To embed the school's approach to spiritual development to ensure that it becomes an intrinsic part of the wider curriculum.
- Further develop assessment systems in religious education (RE) to enhance teaching and learning, maintain curriculum effectiveness and sustain good progress.



Inspection Findings

Effective leaders preside over a school that is inclusive, nurturing and caring. Its vision, constructed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, is reflective of the current school community's ambitions and aspirations for all. It inspires adults and pupils to live well together guided by their six core values. Handprints display these values of hope, honesty, forgiveness, friendship and trust, with love at the centre. These are found in all shapes and sizes throughout the school subtly highlighting diversity. This outworking of the vision inspires the school community to 'love my neighbour.' The Federation of Longhorsley and Whalton schools share the same vision. Leaders enable staff from the two schools to work collaboratively to share expertise, nurture pupils and inspire academic aspiration. The school's vision is at the root of decision making and strategies that are employed at the school. Leaders have thorough systems in place to regularly evaluate the impact of the vision. Therefore, they know the positive difference it makes in the lives of adults and pupils. Pupils of all ages acknowledge that their 'neighbour' can be anyone near or far. Parents reiterate the culture of togetherness that their children experience daily and how this enables them to grow.

The Trinity curriculum is underpinned by the school's vision and associated values. It is enhanced through a resilience, empathy, self-awareness, passion, excellence, communication and teamwork (RESPECT) character development approach. These combine to give solid foundations upon which a Christian ethos, academic aspiration and wellbeing are built. Pupils experience learning that empowers them to be the best that they can be from the earliest point. School leaders and governors demonstrate an unwavering commitment to meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils especially those with SEND. Tailored individual support, patience, guidance and deep personal relationships built on trust are the norm in this inspiring school. Longstanding partnerships with external agencies further enhance the school's ability to meet pupils' needs. This enriches a culture of togetherness and achievement. Staff know the pupils and recognise times when support is needed. The newly completed Longhorsley Lounge of Peace is a haven for pupils where good mental health and wellbeing is fostered. Many opportunities for spiritual development exist. However, this is not yet embedded in the school's approach and therefore, opportunities for spiritual growth are underdeveloped.

Collective worship is a daily shared experience that is inclusive, invitational and inspirational. Planned in collaboration with the parish priest, it reflects a coherent and thoughtful shaping of the school's worship life. The school's core values guide the planning process. Worship is strengthened by musical accompaniments which promote diversity and help pupils recognise Christianity as a global faith. Moments of silence, reflection and prayer are woven in which provide opportunities for spiritual growth. These are wholly invitational and the needs of all are sympathetically considered. This enhances the connections which bond the school community. RE ambassadors play an important role in worship. From inviting a pupil to light candles reflecting God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to leading aspects of prayer and response. These moments give pupils a sense of ownership and build stronger relationships between one another. It is clear from pupils' evaluation of worship that it makes an important and positive impact upon them.

Leaders go above and beyond what would normally be expected to meet the often-challenging circumstances some pupils face. Overcoming these with patience, expertise and determination encapsulates all that their vision represents. These actions undoubtedly lead to the flourishing of pupils and are highlighted by parents. Leaders maximise the opportunities that being part of a federation bring, especially for the pupils. This includes shared trips. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their friends from Whalton and the opportunities they have to



collaborate. The Longhorsley Lounge of Peace demonstrates the priority that leaders place on wellbeing and good mental health. Its interior is relaxing and filled with items suggested by pupils, from bean bags to a chandelier. Staff and pupils use this for non-academic purposes and identify it as an investment in the emotional needs of all. Staff recognise the support that governors and school leaders provide for them through school policies and ongoing practices. The school and federation vision and associated values are central to the harmonious environment that exists at Longhorsley St. Helen's. Positive relationships begin with this, and pupils are increasingly self-reflective when any disagreements occur.

A culture of justice and responsibility towards others permeates this school. Leaders foster powerful relationships and support pupils to reflect on their place in society and acknowledge the needs of others. Pupils contribute to the daily life of the school in roles such as RE ambassadors, eco-committee and school council membership. Furthermore, they independently identify issues where they feel they can make a difference and help others. Pupils carry out meaningful actions to overcome injustices and impact positively on the lives of others. These range from collecting ring-pulls to fund wheelchairs for those with disabilities, to securing a new bike rack. Leaders continue to enhance an outwards looking culture of justice and responsibility towards others. Pupils fully understand and engage with this due to their understanding of who their 'neighbour' is.

The RE curriculum follows the diocesan syllabus providing a high-quality, sequential programme of teaching and learning. Leaders prioritise RE and it reflects its place on the curriculum of a Church school. It is taught in morning sessions to raise standards and enable pupils to contribute their best efforts. Governors and leaders regularly monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in the RE curriculum and act upon their findings. This helps to maintain a high-quality study of key learning. Assessment systems in RE are underdeveloped. Therefore, pupils can not always tell how well they are progressing in RE or how to improve their work. The teaching of RE is central to the outworking of the school's vision and fosters knowledge of Christianity as a living and diverse faith. Pupils demonstrate substantive, disciplinary and growing personal knowledge in their RE work. Lessons allow opportunities for collaborative exploration of challenging statements and questions. These enable pupils to draw on theology, big questions and the impact of faith on life. Regular attendance at diocesan training enables staff to teach in a meaningful and informed manner. Diversity plays a key role across the curriculum and leaders ensure opportunities are maximised to enhance this. Pupils visit places of worship from a range of faiths to gain knowledge on a variety of religious views. This gives pupils an appreciation of diversity and prepares them for life in all its fullness.

Information

Address	Drummonds Close, Longhorsley, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 8UT		
Date	9 December 2024	URN	122283
Type of school	Voluntary aided first school	No. of pupils	85
Diocese/District	Newcastle		
MAT/Federation	The Federation of Whalton and Longhorsley Church of England Schools		
Headteacher	Nichola Brannen		
Chair of Governors	Paul Truscott		
Inspector	Kevin Taggart		