

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

King Oswy Drive
West View
Hartlepool
TS24 9PB

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Hartlepool
Dates of inspection: 8 and 9 March 2010
Date of last inspection: 2 and 3 July 2007
School's unique reference number: 1333293
Headteacher: Mr Colin Reid
Inspector's name and number: Mr Brian Hedley 619

School context

This average sized school serves north Hartlepool and has been a specialist Engineering College since 2004. It holds Healthy Schools and Sportsmark Awards and has Investors in People status. The numbers of students entitled to free school meals and those with special educational needs are well above average in all Year groups.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Hild's Voluntary Aided School as a Church of England school are good

St Hild's is an inclusive school. High quality pastoral care strongly promotes the uniqueness and worth of every person. Each member of the school community is encouraged to develop their God-given potential and to take responsibility for their own life-choices.

Established strengths

- Collective Worship and 'Thought for the Day', which influences thinking and day-to-day actions
- Good, enthusiastic teaching and learning in RE and Citizenship
- A senior leadership team who are committed to, and effective in driving improvement

Focus for development

- Help all staff and learners feel confident about articulating the school's vision and the implications for their work
- Review planning for RE, Collective Worship, Citizenship, SEAL and PSHCE together, linking related themes and assessment opportunities to guide planning and learning
- Ensure that all school policies, when revised, make Christian values explicit and that governors are more robustly involved in evaluation of their effectiveness

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

The school's Christian identity is promoted well by staff and understood by learners. The level of respect and care is high. Students talk frequently about this: 'Religion is never forced; you're welcomed whoever you are' and, 'the teachers help you put the Christian ethos into everyday things, like being a good student'. Learners' progress is at least satisfactory, given their well-below average starting points; achievement is closely monitored and data confirms that they are well on track to reach their challenging targets. Strong partnerships with external stakeholders are helping to raise attainment and accelerate progress. The Library Resource Centre staff, Family Liaison Worker, Breakfast Club and School Council was praised by learners because of the contribution they make to enhancing self-image and well-being: 'It's great to come here every day. You feel safe and can talk to people about things. That makes

you feel a lot better', and 'School Council gives us the chance to make a difference at our school'. Chaplaincy arrangements have developed well since last inspection; this is a half-time post. Adults and students talk freely about the impact of the Chaplain's Christian presence citing in particular, Collective Worship, RE, ministry of welcome, the prayer-life of the school, and the unconditional care and support they receive from her. The school's regular news magazine 'Forward' celebrates the impact being a Church school has on community life. 'It is not the words alone of our mission statement that signifies St Hild's as a Church of England School, but the reality of our daily life together'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

'Thought for the Day' and Collective Worship are prominent and central to the life of the school. Students said, 'they definitely make you think' and that 'they often change your view about things'. The range of worship leaders guarantees that the school community experiences a breadth of worship styles. Careful planning ensures that the integrity of those present is not compromised and that everyone finds something positive for themselves. Observing the cycle of the Church's year, and the number and range of Christian symbols helps to underpin the school's Anglican Foundation. Further exploration of shared elements such as the use of music and simple responses could extend this even further. During inspection, Year 7 were exploring the journey of Lent using their senses. Activities gave them memorable and enjoyable experiences, helped them to make effective use of silence in opportunities for reflection and prayer, and provided the chance for them to understand more about the season leading up to Easter. Learners are increasingly involved in planning, delivery and evaluation of Collective Worship. Results of the student survey about 'Thought for the Day', Collective Worship and RE are being used to plan future developments.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education is well-planned and managed by a hard-working, fully committed Faith and Spirituality Co-ordinator. No students are withdrawn from lessons. Good resources including interactive whiteboards are used effectively to engage, stimulate and motivate learners who spoke enthusiastically of opportunities to explore their own attitudes, express opinions and debate issues. This was confirmed during a very effective Year 11 lesson looking at 'Punishment in light of Christian teaching on forgiveness', and again during an outstanding Year 10 Citizenship lesson focusing on Rights, Responsibilities and 'Fairtrade', which led to a deeply thoughtful group discussion by the students about human dignity and impact on lives. Assessment data confirms that Key Stage 4 outcomes are above the national average. Community cohesion is promoted well. As a result, both local and world-wide good causes have benefitted hugely from fund-raising efforts over many years. GAT students described the impact of their visits to Berlin and Krakow, explaining that going to Auschwitz and interviewing a survivor had left them with powerful memories: 'The visit turned the words of text books into a reality and showed what misuse of power can really lead to'.

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

The Headteacher and Core Team are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are absolutely committed towards achieving 'outstanding' status as a Church school. Further work needs to be done to help all adults and learners feel confident about expressing and articulating the school's vision and the implications for their work. Whilst Christian ethos can be found to underpin much of the school's documentation, this is not consistent. For example, the Behaviour Policy makes no mention of the Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation; rather, it considers 'powers' and 'right to punish', yet in practice, forgiveness and reconciliation are at the bedrock of pastoral care. Recent changes in the membership and structure of the governing body have strengthened capacity and encouraged a new level of commitment. However, there is an urgent need for governors to become more robustly involved in self-evaluation and to reflect on current arrangements for succession planning at all levels.