



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

King Oswy Drive, West View
Hartlepool
TS24 9PB

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Hartlepool Borough Council

Dates of inspection: 3-4 December 2014

Date of last inspection: 8-9 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 1333293

Headteacher: Penny Barker

Inspector's name and number: Nicholas Chamberlain NS508

School context

St.Hild's is slightly smaller than most secondary schools. Serving North Hartlepool, the school's catchment is essentially that of Holy Trinity and St.Hilda's parishes. Most students are White British. A high proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium. A high proportion of students are identified with special educational needs. St Hild's has been a specialist school for engineering since 2004. The school is currently led by an Acting Headteacher. The incumbent of Holy Trinity is currently on long-term leave of absence. The Ofsted inspection of February 2013 judged the school to require improvement.

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

- A fully embedded Christian ethos is being rapidly accepted as a badge of pride by learners, all of whom deeply value the commitment and care offered to them by the school's staff.
- Well chosen 'Thoughts for the Day' are accessible to students and staff in different ways and widely valued.
- Dedicated subject leadership and teaching is rapidly leading to outstanding prospects in religious education.
- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher and her colleagues is driving up standards and opening an exciting vision of the future, inspired by Christian values.

Areas to improve

- Consulting widely, including with learners, create a chapel at the heart of the school as a resource for worship, spiritual development and community gathering.
- Explore fully and then share widely the school's embryonic theology for raising achievement.

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

An historically strong Christian ethos has recently been given distinctive focus and impact by the school's translation of John 10.10 (the school's key text) as 'Life to the Max'. This has allowed a Christian vision of human flourishing to be appropriated by all, and has thus successfully engaged the whole school community. Staff express this vision through their outstanding commitment to learners, evidenced by rigorous pursuit of improved attainment and selfless offering of mentoring and out of school activities. Staff knowledge of every learner is outstanding. Academic profiling is combined with sensitivity to personal circumstance. Early intervention demonstrates the respect that staff hold for their charges and is one part of a truly comprehensive package of challenge and care that extends from meeting material and emotional needs through to intellectual and spiritual development. Regular formal review is combined with daily informal monitoring; a key benefit of the recently stream-lined management and leadership structure. The result of this outstanding care is a rapidly developing sense in the student body that they matter as people in their own right. Aspirations are being raised and confidence developed. Students support each other both formally and informally. The Christian foundation of the school is promoting rapidly improving academic attainment. Religious Education, now taken as a GCSE by all learners, provides crucial opportunity for the exploration of core Christian values and supports the general acquisition of skills and knowledge. Serving a community that has experienced tough challenges, St.Hild's ethos sensitively nurtures diversity, under the banner of flourishing for all. The relevance of a school with a generous Christian character in its particular context is fully understood by all at St.Hild's. The next challenge for the school is to extend the ethos that it has carefully shaped for both adults and learners, in order to enable personal decision about faith to be made and personal expression of faith to be better sustained, both in school and in the wider community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is another established strength. The pattern that was commended during the last SIAMS inspection has been ably maintained, whatever other pressures the school has experienced, thus providing a strong skeleton supporting the school's life. The recent introduction of termly whole school celebration, flowing into a shared meal, has sensitively introduced a Eucharistic element, accessible to all, that might in time lead to fully-understood sacramental provision. The recent celebration of achievement at St.Hilda's church received universal acclaim and also strengthens a key partnership. The school chaplain's continued sensitive, incisive, well-judged Thoughts for the Day, pastoral care, spiritual accompaniment and support to learning is widely valued. Different Christian traditions, different expressions of Anglicanism and the contributions of other world faiths are carefully moulded into termly and yearly patterns. Learners' views about worship are regularly surveyed and taken into account in planning and delivery. Close working partnerships between chaplain, acting Headteacher, the religious education department and the ethos committee of the Governing Body mean that the reflective practice which is so typical of the school's approach to learning also characterises its worship, ensuring an agreed view of necessary further developments. These include supporting and encouraging learners' contribution to the shaping and leadership of worship, especially by boys, and promoting a greater theological articulacy for all. The possibility of creating a chapel, currently under careful consideration, offers a significant opportunity for deepening spirituality, offering further opportunity for engagement and providing a sacred space at the school's heart.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Learners enjoy religious education, contribute effectively in lessons and are offered consistently well-planned, carefully targeted and relevant opportunities to learn. Teaching in some lessons is outstanding. The subject leader is an excellent ambassador for her discipline, a dedicated team-worker and has made a crucial contribution to religious education's current

position as a major plank in the school's drive for higher attainment. Levels of attainment are improving rapidly in religious education in all year groups. Directed provision is being focused towards different cohorts of students in Year 11 to ensure that every student makes the maximum progress and achieves the highest outcome possible in their examinations. The well-targeted curriculum and the popular religious education Year 10 subject conference have successfully increased levels of interest in the subject. Other subject leaders commend the department on both the transferable skills that it is nurturing and the contribution that it is making to the sum of students' knowledge. The department ensures that students fully understand the significance of Christian faith while also learning about the importance of respect for followers of other faiths or none. Very low levels of knowledge and achievement in this subject on entry to the school are being swiftly and consistently addressed. I fully agree with the strong commendation offered by the National Society's January 2014 subject review.

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

This weakest area in the last SIAMS inspection is now one of the strongest. The Acting Headteacher has galvanised action, sparked vision and taken overdue strategic decisions, all while respecting the foundations laid by her predecessors. The leadership team is slimmer, more visible, and uniformly supportive of the drive to make St.Hild's into a beacon Christian school in the community. The Governing Body, equally, has carefully reorganised itself to meet the challenges that the school faces. Crucially, the leadership team itself exhibits outstanding class-room practice, thus modelling what it requires from others and demonstrating the balance between energy, self-giving and openness to being reflective that is a key component of the school's gathering success. Future leaders are being nurtured and partnerships developed, such as with St.Hilda's Parish Church. In order to develop further it is now necessary to hold rigorous shared conversations about what it is to be a Church of England school in North Hartlepool in the early twenty-first century. The seed of John 10.10 has been planted into soil that has been tended over the years. Young people are now wearing their 'Life to the Max: Team St.Hild' hoodies with pride on the streets of the neighbourhood. It is vital that a fully adumbrated local theology for the raising of achievement should now be discerned and disseminated, in partnership with others, including those organisations and institutions that are currently under stress.

SIAMS report [December 2014] [St Hild, Hartlepool] [TS24 9PB]