

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Oswald's Church of England (Aided) Infant and Nursery School, Church Street, Durham, Co Durham, DH1 3DQ

Diocese:	Durham
Local authority:	Durham
Date of inspection:	March 12 th 2013
Date of last inspection:	November 2 nd 2007
School's unique reference number:	114228
Headteacher:	Mrs. Gill Harrison
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs. Jane Katsambis No 253

School context

This very popular school was established in 1847 and moved from a voluntary controlled church school to a church aided school in 2005. There are proposals in place for the school to become 'primary' in 2014. It is situated close to Durham city centre, the university, St Oswald's Church and the Cathedral. The accommodation is set over two floors and has benefited from many improvements over a number of years leading to a pleasant, bright and purposeful environment. A relatively small area externally has been creatively zoned demarcating space for quiet play, reflection and more boisterous games. Secure fencing, gates and stringent access procedures enable parents to know that their children are safe at school. There are 52 part time pupils in Nursery and 83 Infant pupils. The Sunshine Club provides an excellent service to the children of parents who require wrap around care. 10% of Nursery and 23% of Primary pupils on roll are visiting from abroad. Most are accompanying parents whilst they attend university. A high proportion of these pupils do not have English as a first language and pupil turnover is higher than average as pupils return to their home countries once parental studies are completed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Oswald's Church of England (Aided) Infant and Nursery School as a Church of England school are outstanding

Christian values are at the heart of daily life and all decisions made within this school. The welcome of new families and induction of pupils is very successful. Children flourish as individuals whatever their starting points. Behaviour is excellent as clear rules and boundaries allow pupils to know what is expected of them. Each child's personal success is celebrated informally in class and through weekly Celebration Assembly; as a result their self-esteem is high and they are happy and secure within a calm Christian family environment.

Established strengths

- Excellent outreach to the community through involvement with the church, cathedral, the elderly, families, other schools and extensive fund raising activities
- Christian values underpin pupils' positive and caring attitudes to each other
- The head teacher and chair of governors have an excellent working relationship resulting in clear leadership, vision and determination
- Quality assessment and tracking procedures and a strong focus on personalised learning, inclusivity and high expectations result in outstanding achievement

Focus for development

- To build 'Barnabas in Schools' (exploring Christianity creatively) methods into the Religious Education curriculum and collective worship planning
- The review and expansion of planning and delivery in collective worship by the head teacher, a foundation governor and vicar to include junior pupils' needs and capabilities - in light of the proposed school changes
- Enable pupils to take responsibility for and lead more aspects of collective worship

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

Christian values underpin all aspects of school life and can be seen both in open, honest and just relationships; as well as lessons, displays and pupils' work. Pupils are secure, respected and happy. They speak enthusiastically about their school, their teachers, the support they receive and care of each other. They flourish in an environment where there is great attention

to the individual and their needs – whether more able or requiring extra support in learning. Staff get to know the children very well and children make outstanding progress as a result. The school welcomes all into its care: Christians, families of another faith or of none. This is enriching to all people associated with the school and greatly adds to the harmony of the wider community. Parents are welcomed into the school to talk about their faith. Such inclusiveness has a major impact on the children's understanding of their place as responsible citizens.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Behaviour is good in collective worship and pupils listen attentively. All pupils and most staff attend. The variety of themes and ways in which the school community is engaged during worship allows all to feel included and affirmed; whatever their background. In order to support the understanding of pupils for whom English is not their first language, leaders help chosen groups of children to act out simple illustrative dramas. This is an engaging and inclusive tool. A series of relevant PowerPoint pictures is also used to enable attentiveness. Singing is enhanced by guitar accompaniment. Prayer is a natural part of the school day; morning, lunch time and evening prayers are said routinely. The Lord's prayer is well known by the pupils. Use of quiet reflection is also well established. Pupils use the prayer tree to record their thoughts and prayers. These are included in school worship and the prayers are later displayed in the church, where more can be added by parishioners. The head teacher collates adult evaluation of collective worship whilst pupils' views are gathered through School Council discussions and plans changed where necessary. The parish vicar is on the governing body. He leads collective worship in school on special occasions as well as taking Eucharist services in church that the school, parents and wider community attend. In light of proposals to expand the school to include Key Stage 2 pupils it would be of benefit for the head teacher, vicar and a foundation governor to review and expand the planning and delivery of collective worship to include junior pupils' needs and capabilities.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils make outstanding progress in religious education and they enjoy this subject. Assessment procedures are robust and clearly inform teaching and learning. The subject leader is conscientious and keen to ensure that planning and subject knowledge is of good quality. Staff professional development is current and relevant, being mainly provided by the diocese. This is enhanced by the involvement of school leaders in the local Church Schools Network Group. These strategies lead to outstanding learning. Philosophy for Children and Godly Play are used to enable pupils to think through important questions. In one lesson observed, pupils were guided by a skilled teacher through the sense of being a creator; one child wrote, 'I feel extraordinarily happy!' They were enabled to express the feelings evoked if their creation were destroyed, 'Hopeless, annoyed, worried, sad, hurt....' This process allowed pupils to reflect and gain a deeper understanding of how they might be able to protect and look after God's wonderful world. The children were deeply engaged and thoughtful throughout. Younger children were also encouraged to think and respond when recalling the Easter story; the teacher here using the question, 'If someone loves you what might they do for you?' It would now be useful to introduce 'Barnabas in School' methods in order to continue developing the creative curriculum.

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

Leadership is outstanding. Honest and open relationships and communication amongst stakeholders has led to a confident school that has clear direction. The head teacher is able to evaluate the school's strengths and next needs well. Her professionalism and ability to work effectively with parents, the church, governors, staff and outside agencies; as well as her recognition of pupils as unique individuals; is enabling the school to achieve excellence. Governors are very committed to the success of the school and aspirations to become a through primary school. With such united leadership next steps in the life of the school should be very effective and exciting.