

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Heighington Church of England Primary School

#### Vision

Life in all its fullness (John 10:10)

At our school, we value and celebrate each individual, recognising achievements and passions while helping every child become their best self. We provide a loving, vibrant environment and an inspiring curriculum that empowers learners to aim high and succeed. Children learn to access information safely, think critically, and explore the world with curiosity. They are encouraged to take risks, challenge themselves, and seek support when needed. Every voice matters here. Guided by our core Christian values—kindness, honesty, respect, safety, and forgiveness—we foster strong relationships and a flourishing community rooted in Jesus’ teachings. School is not just a place; it is our family.

Heighington Church of England Primary 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.

#### Notable Strengths

- The Christian vision is well embedded and understood by the school community. It enables staff and pupils to respect, collaborate and support each other.
- A bespoke curriculum, shaped by the Christian vision, is enriched through planned opportunities for talk. This supports pupils, including those who are vulnerable, to flourish.
- Through the school’s vision and values, leaders have created an inclusive culture, where people are treated well. This ensures a calm school environment, which is underpinned by forgiveness.
- A culture of wellbeing and care for one another powerfully enhances lives and relationships. Pupils and adults are valued as the unique person they are within a loving school family.

#### Development Points

- Strengthen the global dimension to the religious education (RE) curriculum. This is to ensure that pupils understand diversity within Christianity as well as deepening their knowledge of a range of religions and worldviews.
- Develop opportunities for pupils to explore issues of justice and injustice. This is to enable them to be active agents of change
- Extend planned opportunities for spirituality across the whole curriculum. This is to further the spiritual flourishing of pupils.



## Inspection Findings

### Vision and Leadership

Heighington Church of England Primary school is a place where pupils and adults, including parents and carers, are known, valued and loved. This enables them to flourish and 'live life in all its fullness'. The Christian vision is well known and understood by the school community. It is regularly reviewed by pupils, staff and the academy council. This ensures that it remains relevant and central to school life. It is further amplified by the school's membership of the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust. Their motto 'every child matters and no child is ever left behind' resonates strongly in this school. Inclusion is at the core of leaders' decisions. The school's associated Christian values are exemplified by adults and pupils. They form the focus for worship and celebration within school. As a result, harmonious relationships create a culture of care and respect. Representatives from the trust, the diocese and the academy council are warmly welcomed into school and meet regularly with pupils, teachers and the senior leadership team. Their evaluative insights feed into ongoing school development. This supports leaders in guaranteeing that the school's vision and values are a lived reality.

### Vision and Curriculum

The school vision underpins leaders' strategic decisions about what they teach and how. The school's bespoke curriculum is crafted to meet the particular needs of the school community. It is enriched by trips, visitors and a variety of extra-curricular activities. A focus on oracy has given pupils the tools to become confident and articulate speakers. Carefully considered questions are planned across subjects, encouraging pupils to think deeply. This enables them to reason, challenge and respect one another's views. Inclusion sits at the heart of the school's approach to learning. Leaders explain that, like the parable of the lost sheep, nobody is left behind. This is clear from strategies in place to meet the individual requirements of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A shared language to describe spiritual moments is known and understood by pupils and staff. However, opportunities to deepen spirituality are not regularly planned for within curriculum subjects. This means that occasions for spiritual growth are limited to spontaneous happenings.

### Worship and Spirituality

Following a clear structure, collective worship provides a purposeful and peaceful time at the end of each day for the school community to come together. Pupils and staff listen, pray and reflect. This is supporting them to grow spiritually. Leaders, with support from the church, carefully plan worship around the school's Christian values. This helps pupils and adults to come to a deeper understanding about them and how they relate to their own lives. The youngest pupils worship together in their classroom. This special time enables them to listen to Bible stories and to experience prayer and reflection at an age-appropriate level. A strong partnership with the local church enriches the prayer life of the school. Weekly Eucharist services and Confirmation classes for older pupils bring the school and church communities together. This helps pupils to appreciate church as an extra layer of support, should they need it. Representatives from the church bring Bible stories to life for the pupils through 'Open the Book' sessions. Special events, such as family worship and seasonal celebrations provide welcomed opportunities for parents to worship alongside their children. This builds a sense of belonging and increases parental awareness of the values lived out within school.

### Vision and School Culture

Relationships and inclusion are at the heart of this flourishing community. The school is not simply considered 'a place' by pupils and adults, but a loving 'family' to which they belong. Leaders greet pupils and their families each morning at the school gate. As a result, parents, carers and pupils feel they are known and accepted for who they are. There is a palpable sense of care throughout the school. Staff are well supported by leaders both personally and professionally. This creates a culture of safety and trust, where people look after one another. This extends to the pupils, who are kind and supportive to each other and quick to celebrate their peers' successes. Good mental health for pupils and adults is a priority for leaders, who are proactive in ensuring help is



available when needed. This is strengthened by effective support from the trust. Consequently, pupils and adults, including leaders, are resilient and feel valued members of a wider community. School is a calm and purposeful place. Disagreements are rare but when they occur restorative conversations, underpinned by the values of respect and forgiveness, ensure that relationships are healed.

#### Vision, Justice and Responsibility

There are many opportunities across the school for pupils to develop their understanding of responsibility. The school council meet regularly with leaders and are keen to make a difference. Recent discussions have led to the establishment of a worship team, to enable pupils to be more active within collective worship. All Year 6 pupils have important jobs to do, which they take incredibly seriously. For example, friend fixers and sports leaders help playtimes to run smoothly. Engaging resources are used to allow pupils to explore and discuss current issues such as climate change. Consequently, pupils learn how to reason and justify their own opinions, as well as how to disagree respectfully with others. Pupils are able to talk about fairness and justice within the context of their school. Individual pupils have performed meaningful actions in response to perceived injustice. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to make ethical choices and to be change-makers.

#### Religious Education

RE is given high priority within the school's curriculum. The committed RE lead accesses regular training through the diocese and the trust. This ensures that current thinking and practice is driving ongoing developments in the subject. The RE lead shares new learning and ideas regularly with teachers. This means they are confident and well equipped to deliver engaging lessons. Books display work of a high standard. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons. They clearly articulate the importance of learning about a range of religions to promote understanding and tolerance. However, they are not able to confidently recall similarities and differences between religions. Pupils value opportunities for discussion around the deep questions posed in lessons. They are beginning to recognise a variety of skills required when learning about religion. They have a good knowledge and understanding about aspects of Christianity. This is further deepened by close links to the local church. However, pupils do not understand differences between Christian faith communities and traditions.

Teaching of RE is strong across the school. Leaders delegate substantial time to ensuring teachers are kept up to date with new developments in the subject. RE forms an important part of the induction process for new staff. Assessment systems are well embedded. Staff regularly look together at books from all year groups. This allows teachers to ensure that pupils are making effective progress in their learning. Further oversight by the academy council, the trust and the diocese supports curriculum development within RE. As a result, there have been recent positive changes to the subject, which are strengthening provision.

## Information

Address	Hopelands, Heighington, County Durham DL5 6PH		
Date	15 January 2026	URN	137022
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	221
Diocese	Durham		
MAT	Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust		
MAT Chair	John Taylor		
Headteacher	Carly Stonier		
Chair of Governors	Lisa Thom		
Inspector	Helen Tait		