

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

### NCEA Grace Darling Church of England Primary School

#### Vision

Grace Darling Primary School is a place where everyone is safe, happy and successful.

Our school is a place where everyone feels safe to be themselves, to follow their dreams and achieve success. Like in St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, everyone in our community is encouraged to "Let all that you do be done in love". With this as our guiding principle, children are nurtured and supported to live life to the fullest and confidently take up their places in society.

Following the Northumberland Church of England Academy (NCEA) Trust's core values of love, inclusivity, goodness, hope and truth, we encourage every child to "Let their light shine".

NCEA Grace Darling 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 school's Christian vision fosters a highly inclusive environment, providing effective support and genuine care for pupils and their families.
- Collective worship is central to the school, encouraging spiritual development for pupils and staff. The school enjoys a strong, mutually beneficial partnership with the church.
- Caring leaders prioritise wellbeing, creating a nurturing climate where both pupils and staff flourish. This culture fosters strong, supportive relationships rooted in Christian love.
- Strong relationships, rooted in the Christian vision, are enhanced through collaboration with the parish church, diocese, and trust. These partnerships provide valuable challenge and guidance to school leaders, enriching and refining the school's provision.

#### Development Points

- Improve the teaching of religious education (RE) to ensure consistent implementation of resources. This too aid pupils in gaining an increasingly deeper theological and philosophical understanding of religions and beliefs.
- Embed robust assessment systems in RE to ensure pupils understand their progress and know how to improve.
- Provide contextually rich opportunities for pupils and adults to deepen their understanding of global faiths and other worldviews.



## Inspection Findings

### Vision and Leadership

At Grace Darling School the Christian vision permeates interactions and decisions. Adults and pupils flourish because the vision is embedded in daily life. It is known, understood and lived out across the school community. Leaders, including governors, are deeply committed and model the vision with love and fidelity. Their decisions prioritise inclusion, dignity and opportunity, especially for the most vulnerable. Leaders have developed strong and purposeful partnerships, enriching the life of the school. The relationship with the diocese is proactive and well established. Regular training and working with other Church schools in the Trust allows high quality provision to be established. Leaders work closely with external services to ensure that pupils and families receive appropriate support. Consequently, these relationships are purposeful and strengthen what Grace Darling provides as a Church school. Ongoing school improvement is ensured through robust self-evaluation systems, including regular monitoring visits.

### Vision and Curriculum

The curriculum is adapted to be relevant to the school context. Great care has been taken to promote an understanding and appreciation of diversity through the curriculum. This is reinforced by planned curriculum activities which broaden pupils' perspectives, develop empathy and build global citizenship. A wide range of reading materials, including the regularly used non-fiction RE books, are accessed in the library. This is allowing pupils to independently explore issues beyond the taught curriculum. The pupils are supported by the Church Mice, a group of parishioners who help with reading. Opportunities for spiritual development are shaped by blending deliberately planned moments of awe and wonder with ordinary activities through the day. Inspired by the vision, the development of the 'beach school' has enriched the curriculum. This learning environment, within nature, encourages pupils to explore the natural world. Pupils use their senses to connect to the world God created, such as listening to the sea or exploring for creatures. The school's vision is a lived reality for pupils, but especially for those with additional needs. With the backing of leaders and governors' bold decisions are taken to enable these pupils to thrive. Leaders have also recognised the need to support pupils' and families. As a result, they employ a full-time Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). This dedicated role is non-teaching, which allows the SENCO to focus entirely on supporting pupils, staff, and families. This work is enabling pupils in school to flourish, especially those who are vulnerable.

### Worship and Spirituality

Collective worship is highly valued as an intrinsic part of life at Grace Darling. The vision promotes opportunities for pupils and adults to experience moments of spiritual growth through this daily act. When expressing how these opportunities allow pupils to reflect one stated, 'it brings peace to me'. Pupils are invited to engage in the Lord's Prayer and there is joyous singing too. Opportunities for stillness and prayer are central to the school day. The worship theme follows a journey through the Bible. The collective worship lead plans worship across the school and staff differentiate to meet the needs of their own classes. Staff are dedicated and driven to providing high quality provision, which can be accessed by pupils and adults. Clergy from the parish church lead or participate in weekly worship in school, as well as providing experience days in the church building. These days allow pupils to consider and experience authentic church traditions, including hymns and prayers. The church and school are active partners, believing together that they serve and are woven into the life of the community. The community often refer to the school as 'God's little acre'.

### Vision and School Culture

The school's vision fosters a culture of nurturing and caring relationships, enabling pupils and adults to live well together. These strong relationships highlight the school's inclusive nature and are highly valued. Staff are committed to the vision and serve as positive role models for pupils. The school closes early one day a week to allow staff to work in collaboration with others across the Trust. These decisions and practices have positively impacted staff workload. A structured approach to wellbeing is adopted, ensuring support for pupils and staff.



The vision is evident in the friendliness, politeness, and excellent conduct of pupils. These behaviours reflect the known trust core Christian values of love, inclusivity, goodness, hope and truth (LIGHT). Pupils believe the vision of 'let all that you do be done in love'. This creates a happy and supportive learning environment where many children can self-regulate their behaviours. Parents and carers deeply appreciate the approachable staff and the culture of love and support they believe extends beyond the school. This positive atmosphere is a direct result of the school's guiding vision, shaping both relationships and the wider community ethos.

#### Vision, Justice and Responsibility

The school's vision actively promotes a thoughtful culture of justice and responsibility. Pupils appreciate how the school's vision inspires them to care for their community and the wider world. As a result, pupils and staff build interactions based around the LIGHT values. Curriculum experiences challenge pupils' understanding of justice and responsibility, creating a culture where they become agents for change. Pupils recognise the importance of showing responsibility and developing resilience. They take pride in the wide range of leadership opportunities available, such as serving as head boy/girl, eco council, and worship leaders. They actively support various charities. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously and understand their impact. They speak passionately about protecting God's creation, drawing inspiration from displays that celebrated the beauty and wonder of the world. Pupils believe that staff genuinely listen to them. This attentive approach fosters a supportive environment where pupils feel confident in expressing themselves and also experience a strong sense of safety.

#### Religious Education

RE is a clear priority within the school. The curriculum for RE is designed to be engaging, ensuring that students are actively involved in their learning and that the subject remains relevant and stimulating. The importance placed on RE is evident through the presence of high-quality displays throughout the school. These displays serve to highlight the subject's significance and engage both pupils and staff. Leadership, including governors, ensure the curriculum is balanced, well-sequenced, and adapted to meet the diverse needs of pupils. This approach fosters engagement and challenge through the exploration of big questions. School leaders are keen to source meaningful experiences in RE to support pupils' understanding of world religions and worldviews. However, pupils are less secure in their understanding across a range of world faiths as a result of limited resources. RE is well led, with professional development supported by the diocese and the trust. This ensures staff are equipped to help pupils succeed.

Memory boards are used at the start of each lesson to encourage questioning, reflection, and recall of prior learning. Pupils enjoy and speak positively about their RE experiences. They can recall key concepts from different religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Pupils speak confidently about what people of different faiths believe and value learning about religious diversity. Lessons are skilfully adapted to enable pupils to flourish, regardless of ability. Assessment is aligned with the key questions explored. However, ongoing assessment throughout each lesson is not used effectively enough to further pupil progress.

## Information

Address	Central Parkway, Northumberland NE64 6RT		
Date	19 November 2025	URN	148765
Type of school	Academy	No. of pupils	370
Diocese	Newcastle		
MAT	Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust		
MAT Chair	John Brearley		
Headteacher	Sharon Cole		
Chair of Governors	Liz Dunn		
Inspector	Ashleigh Lees		