

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Accrington St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Devonshire Street
Accrington Lancashire
BB5 1DW

Diocese of Blackburn

Lancashire LEA

SIAS inspection: 10-11 January 2006

Previous S23 inspection: 6-9 October 2003

URN: 119446

Headteacher: Ms J R Strong BA (Hons)

SIAS Inspector NS: P J Ingram B Sc

Context

The school has 143 pupils on roll which is a decline of approximately fifty pupils since the last inspection three years ago. Most pupils come from the immediate area surrounding the school which faces considerable socio-economic challenge. Although the percentage of pupils with special education needs has been reduced it is still well above the national average. Changes in the number of pupils on roll are above the national average. Overall, pupils' attainment is well below national averages on entry to the school. There is a minority of pupils with Asian heritage backgrounds. The school has had major changes in leadership and staff during the year prior to the inspection. There are mixed age groups in all classes except Year 6.

Summary Judgement

Accrington St Mary Magdalen's C of E Primary School has a distinctive Christian character and is a very effective Church of England school.

Established strengths

- Collective worship which is of a high quality is a central feature of the life of the school.
- The school is a caring Christian community which values all its pupils.

Focus for development

- The enhancement of the teaching of religious education by the monitoring and assessment of pupils learning with the use of national standard criteria.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet all learners' needs?

The school is good in meeting the needs of all learners through its distinctive Christian character. Pupils demonstrate their strong increase in spiritual awareness by their full involvement in worship and their developing understanding of the links between the Christian nature of collective worship and religious education. Pupils are well behaved and appreciate the friendship of other pupils. Pupils and their families are fully involved in the strong links with the local parish church. Pupils regard service to the community by raising money for charity as important, for example by carol singing at in the centre of town. They expressed concerns about the untidiness of the churchyard, which detracts from it as a place of remembrance. The school succeeds in good measure in meeting the aims of its mission statement. Relationships are very good between pupils and staff and between pupils. All pupils are confident to talk about their differing faiths and approach teachers and the Vicar who is a regular visitor to the school.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community?

Collective worship has a good effect on the school community. Pupils enjoy collective worship and have a good appreciation of its importance in the life of the school. Standards of singing in morning worship are high and all pupils take a full part in the singing of hymns and appropriate songs. One act of worship each week is the responsibility of a class group to plan it and one such group was observed preparing for the next day's worship after school. Older pupils were able to describe the hymn from morning worship by humming it in tune. Pupils listen to the theme of the worship and are ready to answer questions. In morning worship two early answers by pupils to the teacher's questions mentioned the names 'God and Jesus' as the reasons for worship, the centre of the school's faith. Pupils were able to relate their code of conduct to the Ten Commandments and our Lord's summary of the law. They demonstrated this in many small ways by consideration for other pupils and teachers and by their good behaviour in general. This theme was developed further in a subsequent act of worship when pupils acted how they should react to the road safety person so that pupils developed an increased understanding of personal safety and caring for others. There are strong links with the adjacent parish church and the school worships at the parish church at major Christian festivals and at an annual Eucharist. Pupils expressed concern about the defacing of the churchyard which detracts from it as a place for remembrance. Prayer is said on a class basis before lunch and at the end of the school day. The school provides a choir for worship at the parish church and school worship and the number of families attending the Christingle service has shown a recent increase. Pupils gave of their time outside school hours by carol singing in the town centre in support of charities. Pupils take part in the review of worship in informal discussions with the headteacher..

How effective is the Religious Education in the school?

The effectiveness of religious education is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of the Christian faith and its links with collective worship. They have a respect for other world religions and displayed a sound knowledge of the cultural differences between Islam and Christianity. Older pupils understand the links between the Jewish Passover, the Last Supper and the Christian celebration of the Eucharist. They appreciate the school as a secure place in which teachers care for them. In a personal and social education lesson related to religious education pupils used good verbal skills to describe where they felt safe. They were confident to express their opinions and other pupils listened with respect. In another lesson pupils started to think about Jesus as a teacher by considering the qualities of a good teacher. Pupils take a full part in lessons, for example, giving their immediate reactions to the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand and developed their ideas further in discussion with their partners. In all lessons teaching assistants were fully involved in pupils' learning. Teaching and learning is at least satisfactory in all lessons with some of it very good. Pupils' writing skills are less secure than their speaking skills. Pupils' attainment is assessed by the use of particular exercises such as the comparison of the nativity story in the Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke. However the school's system for assessing pupils' performance in religious education is not fully developed.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

Leadership and management of the school as a church school are good. Leadership and management ensure that pupils' learning is provided within a secure and caring Christian community. Pupils have confidence to bring problems to their teachers and they value the friendship of other pupils. Parents have noted the recent improvement in standards of pupils' behaviour and give full support to the leadership and management of the school. Pupils understand the links between the Christian nature of collective worship and religious education and there are strong links with other subjects such as music, art and history. Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school based on the strong links between the chair of governors, the Vicar and the newly appointed headteacher. The associate headteacher began a review of school policies in consultation with the new headteacher during the autumn term 2005. The headteacher has a very positive vision for the school which gives full support to its Christian character and this is fully recognised by pupils. The headteacher has introduced an improved approach to assessing the effectiveness of collective worship. The newly appointed subject leader teaches to a high standard, has a clear understanding of the teaching aims and objectives of religious education and has been fully involved in discussion with the Vicar and other teachers in revising its scheme of work. All these changes have already had a positive impact on the learning of pupils and provide a sound basis for the further development of the school.

SIAS January 2006 Accrington St Mary Magdalen's CE VA Primary School Accrington BB5 1DW