

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Bickerstaffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Hall Lane  
Bickerstaffe  
Ormskirk  
Lancashire L39 0EH

**Diocese: Liverpool**

LA: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> May 2006 & 9<sup>th</sup> June 2006

Date of last inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2000

School's Unique reference number: 119381

Headteacher: Mrs J Hall

Inspector's name and number: Mrs B Horsfall

#### **School context**

Bickerstaffe Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average primary school serving a rural community. The majority of pupils are Christian and of white British background and the faith. A new headteacher and senior manager were appointed during this academic year. The school is in a beautiful setting. Improvements to the administration area and pupils' toilets have recently been completed.

The number of pupils who have learning difficulties is broadly average, although those with statements of special educational need are above average. A privately run pre-school and after-school care facility operates in the school each day. Work has begun towards the achievement of Healthy and ECO Schools' awards.

#### **Summary Judgement**

Bickerstaffe Church of England Primary School is a good school that has a strong Christian ethos. Pupils feel happy and secure in a calm, caring and pleasant environment. The new headteacher has excellent, clear vision for the school's improvement and is well supported by the whole school community.

Worship occupies a secure place in the life of the school and contributes substantially to pupils' effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Links with the local church are very good, especially through ministers' regular contribution to worship.

#### **Established strengths**

- Pupils are happy and secure: they are valued as individuals and benefit from a warm family atmosphere.
- Relationships are characterised by Christian care and concern for others resulting in a calm, well ordered environment.
- Links with the local Church and community are strong: the school is 'loved and cherished by the community'.
- During collective worship, the school regularly celebrates pupils' achievement and demonstrates links with the wider curriculum and life.

#### **Focus for development**

- Improve plans and presentation of Collective worship and ensure that systems are in place for effective monitoring and evaluation.
- To manage issues regarding mandatory regulations that are related to criteria for admission policy and parental rights in the school brochure
- Offer Christian spiritual and reflective opportunities to pupils in every classroom

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

Christian values permeate school life and a strong family atmosphere has good impact on pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils are happy, secure, enjoy their work and subsequently make sound progress. The school is a calm, well ordered place with a pleasant atmosphere where the few conflicts are resolved compassionately and speedily. Relationships exemplify Christian principles and have a positive effect on pupils' attitude.

Although a majority of pupils are of white British heritage, pupils have good

opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures. They speak fluently of experiences at a Jewish Synagogue, articulately explaining the preparations of a Jewish boy for his Bar Mitzvah celebration and are enthusiastic when discussing the variety and tastes of food from different cultures.

The school's environment visually portrays Christian commitment through display and by providing some areas of focus for reflection, although the setting for younger children should be used more positively to encourage spiritual and reflective development..

Links with the local church and community are strong. The headteacher, as a member of the local church, is working hard and with determination to promote even better liaison: she writes in the Church Magazine about school life and encourages members of the congregation to support school as volunteers.

#### **What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?**

Collective worship occupies a secure place in the life of the school. Acts of worship are consistently sound in quality, with some good elements. Older children, for example, can recount valuable experiences of prayer and reflection during the Epilogue services at a residential centre. Pupils' achievement is regularly celebrated during worship. Families are welcomed to these services where good links are made with the wider curriculum and pupils' carefully reflect on the week's experiences. Major festivals in the Christian year are celebrated in school, church and Anglican Cathedral. Some pupils are given responsibility to prepare and present parts of services. The Church Lay Reader is a regular leader of worship and pupils are in awe of the 'flaming bible' demonstrated during Book Week worship. They understand that the Bible is full of exciting stories and can 'set us on fire for life'. Pupils act appropriately during worship, but do not always show enthusiasm in response or singing. Although some pupils write sensitive prayer, demonstrating considerable spiritual depth, more opportunity is needed for them to be used during worship.

The school has identified issues for improvement in Collective Worship, but to be effective a strategy to monitor and evaluate its quality should be included.

The new headteacher is innovatively linking Sunday Church worship themes with her plans for the week's subsequent collective worship in school. Plans overall are, however, inconsistent and do not give a broad or clear picture of collective worship.

Details from all leaders, a wide variety of prayers and greetings [some specifically Anglican], opportunities for prayer and reflection, traditional hymns and a variety of school settings are not included in present plans.

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

The headteacher and governors significantly contribute to the success of the school as a church school.

Under the new headteacher's leadership a positive impact can be seen on school improvement and standards. She has quickly developed a shared vision that shows determination to improve collective worship and links with the local church.

Self-evaluation includes everyone involved with school and everyone's views are valued and utilised. However, parents, local church and community are unified as they work for the benefit of everyone in the village. Pupils have good opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills when involved in local activities. For example, staff and pupils join in village Maypole dancing in a weekend celebration and the community unite at the Remembrance Day service. The local community have great regard for the school – it is 'loved and cherished'.

The headteacher and governors have identified the need to update the admissions policy to contain clear criteria. In the school brochure there is no statement to inform parents of their right to withdraw their child from Religious Education.