

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Canon Sharples Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Whelley,
Wigan,
Lancashire,
WN2 1BP

Diocese: Liverpool

LA: Wigan

Dates of inspection: 12th & 15th June 2006

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's Unique reference number: 133781

Headteacher: Mr. Roy Mason

Inspector's name and number: Elizabeth Collins

School context

Canon Sharples is a large Voluntary Aided primary school and nursery north-east of the centre of Wigan. Formed following the amalgamation of St. John the Baptist, New Springs and St. Stephen's Whelley it opened initially in the old buildings in September 2004, moving to the new, purpose built site in *January 2005*. Most of the pupils come from the two parishes with the vast majority being of white British origin: barely 3% are from minority ethnic background - a small number being of other faiths. There were significant changes of staff at senior level at amalgamation, although all other staff from the two schools were offered positions in the new school.

Summary Judgement

Canon Sharples is a good church school having established very quickly and effectively a clearly defined sense of its own identity and distinctiveness. It is secure in how this is proclaimed so proudly through the Mission Statement and other school documentation and has set high expectations for staff and pupils in promoting Christ centred values and attitudes in their daily living.

Established strengths

- Following considerable uncertainty and distrust initially the new senior management team and governors have very successfully established a settled and harmonious, united community;
- Children are confident and happy, proud of their school and secure in their attitudes and relationships with those around them;
- The natural advantages of the school environment have been exploited to the full to enable all to live and learn in a spiritually uplifting setting.

Focus for development

- To ensure the School Improvement Plan always contains a strand which relates to issues linked to the school's distinctive Christian character;
- To establish a clear policy for worship following the inclusive model used for writing the Mission Statement.

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

The school is good and in many respects very good and outstanding in meeting the needs of all pupils. There is a growing perception of what this young community is about and the importance of the role of each of its members – from the youngest to the most senior - within the whole. Relationships at all levels are very good. Children and adults treating each other with 'curtsey and consideration'; the small number of pupils with significant physical and learning needs moving around the building confidently and in the obvious knowledge of being safe and secure, integrated with their peers and respected for who they are; a Reception child, answering the question who do we talk to by saying, 'My baby brother, to see if he is O.K': all demonstrate the whole thrust of the Christ centred Mission Statement and school aims in action on a daily basis.

The sense of belonging and ownership is reinforced by the class portrait gallery outside each room and the orderly, self-disciplined manner in which children use the open space of the 'the street'. The entrance space is used very effectively to draw the eye in to the image of the school badge etched on glass, a stylised cross with words from Psalm 31 along each arm and pictures of Canon Sharples' pupils and children from around the world: this gives immediate identification of what the school

is about and its foundation and purpose. Christian symbols around the building and the general lay-out offer an invitation for reflection and quiet as a natural part of the day.

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

Worship is central to daily school life and it makes a very good contribution to supporting pupils in their personal growth and spiritual development. Children of all ages take an active part: listening with care, responding appropriately to the expectations of formal liturgical language; enjoying the informality of presentations; singing enthusiastically and making the process their own. The presence and involvement of all adults in the school sets a good example and role model for pupils and emphasises the importance of prayer and worship. This allows other 'prayerful' moments to be a natural pause during the day.

The regular celebration of the Eucharist further extends children's encounter with worship. Liturgy that is imaginative and appropriately constructed for the age and aptitude of the pupils gives an excellent introduction to the central act of worship of the Church of England. Celebrated in the school hall, the service has also become a central plank for mission to the United Benefice of St. Stephen's and St. John the Baptist: truly placing the school at the heart of the gospel locally!

While whole school worship clearly reflects the expectations of the Mission Statement and school aims it is still mainly the domain of the Headteacher and Vicar. Policy and procedures now need to be established to ensure this good practice is maintained and understood.

How effective is the religious education?

Religious education (RE) is good overall and makes a good contribution to the children's spiritual and moral development. The ability to articulate ideas clearly and often with considerable confidence, and to listen to each other's ideas with genuine interest allows pupils in all age groups to learn well in RE and achieve standards at least in line with the expectations of the Diocesan syllabus and in some instances above. Knowledge of Biblical stories is demonstrated during worship as well as used to effect in RE. Older pupils showed good understanding of how symbols work in religious thinking and could apply the concept to other ideas, making excellent use of metaphor and simile. Younger children tackled exercises with enthusiasm, offering thoughtful, mature ideas about heaven: 'people being happy', 'the presence of Jesus' and 'a circle of love'.

Good displays in many classrooms and pupils written material illustrates the quality of work achieved by the majority of pupils and their enjoyment of the subject. Monitoring and evaluation to date has, however, been limited by the long-term absence of the RE co-ordinator. Once this is rectified there will be opportunity to share good practice and to explore ways of promoting the subject more overtly in the life of the school.

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

The quality of leadership and management is good overall. The engaging of all involved with the school to contribute to the Mission Statement and aims effectively set the distinctiveness of the establishment to the fore of thinking from the beginning. All who were to be part of the implementation of these documents were also successfully involved in the vision. The continuation of consultation with pupils and parents on general school issues is good, inclusive practice. The centrality of the school to the nurturing of the local church community places the former in a unique position for developing and sustaining its distinctive Christian character.

There are still major areas linked to the school's ethos and foundation which would benefit from a whole school approach, however, and these areas should have a place in the School Improvement Plan. Likewise senior managers and governors need to plan how to monitor and evaluate ongoing work to ensure the vision continues to flourish.