

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Dalton St. Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Higher Lane,
Dalton,
Wigan
WN8 7RP

Diocese: Liverpool

LA: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: Thursday June 15th 2006

Date of last inspection: 22 November 1999

School's Unique reference number: 119493

Headteacher: Mrs G Goodson

Inspector's name and number: Mr R H Hardwick 121

School context

Dalton St Michael's is a smaller than average primary school with 61 pupils currently on roll. Most pupils travel to the school from the Skelmersdale area. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Whilst the number of those with special educational needs is average compared to other schools the number with a statement of special need is above average. Overall the level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school is in line with national expectations

Summary Judgement

Dalton Saint Michael's is a good church school where children are well-known, valued and developed as individuals. It is a lively and happy learning community where children make good progress in their spiritual moral and social development as well as their academic work.

Established strengths

- The quality of relationships in school between all members of the school community
- The strong, effective working relationship between the headteacher, governors and the local church
- The quality of collective worship in school
- The significant contribution which is made to the school by volunteers

Focus for development

- To create places in school where children can concentrate on quiet reflective prayer
- In religious education to introduce a system of assessment in order to ensure that standards are in line with national expectations
- Develop a portfolio of work in religious education to illustrate pupils' progress over time .

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

The school through its distinctive Christian character makes good provision for the needs of all learners. Pupils enjoy their school life and learning and make good progress during their time in school. The pupils relate well to each other and their teachers who know them very well. Some pupils act as buddies for those who may experience difficulties. Relationships around the school and in class are very good and the very good level of pastoral care reflects the way the mission statement is realised in practice. Pupils are aware of the efforts made by their teachers to find out how they can learn most effectively. Pupils have taken part in various fund raising activities, the latest being a scheme to buy two goats for a village in Africa. The school code of conduct has been developed in consultation with the children and gives a strong lead in their moral and social development. Staff speak respectfully and lovingly to pupils and are very careful of pupils' feelings when firm words are appropriate. An infant writing to prospective pupils said " We put love in our school". The school environment has a very good range of displays of various kinds including pupils' religious education work which give Christianity a high visual profile. Pupils could explain what the alpha and omega symbols on display meant. Prayer is an integral part of school life, however there are insufficient places for pupils to pray

quietly or share their prayer concerns with others.

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

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good. A detailed scheme of worship themes over a four-year rolling programme ensures comprehensive coverage of the church's year. It links worship to religious education themes and special days such as holocaust memorial day. The school makes the most of cramped conditions to provide a worship table as a focal point for worship that is thoughtfully decorated with various significant objects including a cross and a special candle which is lit during worship. A board behind the worship table is used to display words and images linked to the current theme. In an act of worship where a range of objects stimulated thoughts about Jesus as the good shepherd pupils responded very well and sang the hymn enthusiastically. They were clearly used to the prayers. Pupils also say grace before lunch and have a very meaningful prayer as the school day ends. Parents said that their children talked about worship as a time they enjoyed and this was evident in conversations with groups of children in school. It strengthens their view of themselves as a community pulling together for each other. The acts of worship in church have a good impact and pupils are encouraged through the Icthus "sticky fish" scheme to attend church services. The school evaluates the impact of worship and asks the children for their views on how to improve it. Worship experienced on a recent trip to St Paul's cathedral has made a strong impression on pupils and staff alike.

How effective is the religious education?

The effectiveness of religious education is good. The subject is taught in the context to two mixed age and mixed ability groups using the amended Diocesan Scheme. The teaching seen in the inspection was good. Pupils generally responded with interest to good questioning and worked well with each other and their teachers. They said that they enjoyed their religious education and that their ideas about God had developed over their time in school. Their progress in lessons and in their written work shows that childrens' achievement in religious education is in line with their achievement in other subjects. Children do not however know how well they are doing or what to do to improve their standards in religious education, because no formal scheme of assessment is yet in use. Organised evidence of their progression over time is also limited. Religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, for example in the work on life as a journey with choices about right and wrong to be made. Material from other faiths is introduced as the syllabus suggests including for example work on Shabbat and Islam which widens pupils' understanding of other people's cultures and beliefs. Religious Education is well resourced. The issues about assessment are already noted for development in the school improvement plan.

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

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are good. The mission statement makes the Christian foundation, strong links with the church and the centrality of worship very clear. The headteacher takes the lead in ensuring that the vision is realised in the day to day life of the school. She, the Chair of Governors and the vicar have carefully considered how they can develop the school's Christian distinctiveness and arrived at a consensus which stands as a clear basis for action in further development. The governors are frequently in school supporting the staff and giving direct support to pupils. They are very well informed and very committed to the school. There is an impressive commitment of time by numerous volunteer adults including the vicar who are keen to see the Christian vision of the learning community realised. Staff are all valued and pull together in an excellent community atmosphere. The views of pupils and parents are sought through formal questionnaires on a regular basis. Parents were very happy with the way the school worked and full of praise for the way their children were developing.

