

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Darwen St James Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Darwen
Lancashire
BB3 0EY

Diocese: Blackburn

LA: Blackburn with Darwen

Dates of inspection: 10th May 2006

Date of last inspection: Between 6th to 15th June 2000

School's Unique reference number:

Headteacher: Miss Margaret Long

Inspector's name and number: Mr Paul Ingram

School context

Darwen St James C of E Primary School has 165 pupils on roll between the ages of four and eleven. This is below the national average for a school of this type. Pupils come from its immediate surroundings which is an area of considerable social deprivation. Approximately ten per cent of pupils are of Asian heritage. There are considerable changes in school role due to movement of pupils in and out of the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above the national average. Substantial internal refurbishment of the school building and its surroundings has taken place over the last three years. The parish church is five minutes walk away from the school and is used for worship at Christian festivals and as a resource for religious education.

Summary Judgement

Darwen St James C of E Primary School has a distinctive Christian character and its effectiveness as a Church of England school is good. Through good leadership, the current headteacher and the governing body are implementing this vision and the school is distinctly positive and Christian. All members of staff give full support to the leadership of the school.

Established strengths

- The school is a safe and caring place where relationships between pupils and staff are good.
- Standards in religious education are high through good teaching by enthusiastic and well-qualified staff.
- All pupils are fully involved in worship which is central to the life of the school.

Focus for development

- Establish a unified strategy for assessing pupils' attainments in religious education,
- Develop existing links between religious education and other subjects.

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

The school is good at meeting the needs of all learners through its distinctive Christian character.

Christian values are evident in every part of the school, particularly in the quality of care. Pupils from all cultures feel safe and happy, secure in the knowledge that their beliefs are respected and valued. The atmosphere around the school is relaxed and very orderly. Pupils show courtesy and consideration to each other and to all adults. They are good mannered and develop self-confidence. Members of staff are good role models for pupils. A wide range of pupils' work is displayed in all rooms and shows pupils' developing spiritual awareness. Governors including the local Vicar provide good support at every level, checking and evaluating the school's progress as a church school and working closely with the headteacher. Pupils are committed to the School Council. The School Council decided to enter the school for the David Bellamy Environmental Award and to raise money for local charities by carol singing in the town centre at Christmas time.

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

Collective worship has a good effect on the school community. School worship is of consistently good quality and central to the life of the school. Despite the varied use of the school hall, care is taken to ensure that acts of worship take place in a well-

ordered and peaceful environment. Worship plays a leading part in pupils' spiritual development. Pupils prepare the hall for worship by providing recorded music for entry and a cross and candles on a suitable table. A mobile screen displaying the cross, a pupil's prayer, the school prayer and mission statement is brought into a prominent position in the hall. Worship has a strong Christian focus linked to pupils' personal development. Christian festivals are celebrated both in school and in church. Pupils are attentive and enjoy the singing of songs and hymns supported by a percussion group. They readily answer questions indicating a good understanding of the theme of the worship. During the inspection, pupils understood the meaning of signs both Christian and secular and the importance of friendships. Pupils entered and left the hall in an orderly manner and worship was concluded with prayers and a time for reflection. Both observed acts of worship provided a good start to the school day.

How effective is the religious education?

Religious education has a good effect on the school community. Teaching and learning in religious education are good. Pupils' attitudes are positive and enthusiastic teaching stimulates their interest. Teachers use music, art and drama in a broad range of teaching approaches linked to the recording of pupils' work. Religious education and personal, social and health education support pupils' moral development. In the three lessons observed during the inspection, older pupils were challenged to think about ideas of heaven in painting and poetry. Younger pupils prepared questions prior to a visit to the parish church. During that visit they asked the questions which they had prepared to the Vicar and the Curate about the various parts of the building and their importance in God's house. In another lesson, pupils developed their understanding of trust by being led by another pupil with their eyes closed around furniture and through gymnastic apparatus. Pupils' achievement in religious education is good. Speaking skills are good throughout the school, with pupils in Years 5 and 6 showing a progression of writing skills.

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. The headteacher, the Vicar supported by the governing body and the lead teacher for religious education and worship have a very positive impact on pupils' behaviour and pupils' enthusiastic attitude to religious education and worship. The leadership of the school is committed to the further development of the spiritual life of the school. All staff share the Christian vision for the school and are involved in its development. All these factors ensure the smooth running of the school. School evaluation accurately recognizes the strengths of the school and areas for further development. While pupils' achievement is systematically recorded, the school does not have common standards for all classes for attainment in religious education. Teachers use skills and knowledge from other subject areas but good practice is not fully shared between all teachers. The management structure and school planning promote the links between religious education and worship so that spiritual awareness is increased for all members of the school community.

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