

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Garstang St Thomas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Kepple Lane,  
Garstang,  
Preston,  
PR3 1PB

**Diocese: Blackburn**

LA: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: 05.07.06

Date of last inspection: 2000

School's Unique reference number: 119528

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Ife

Inspector's name and number: Penny Hollander

#### School context

The school is situated in the ancient market town of Garstang, North Lancashire. It is a one form entry school with currently 180 pupils on roll from a wide socio-economic mix. There is high inward mobility of 42% in KS2. A new Rural Children's Centre on the site will open in September 2006, offering core services to the families of the rural Wyre District.

#### Summary Judgement

St Thomas' is a good church school with some outstanding features, particularly in the personal development and well-being of pupils. A strong Christian ethos permeates every aspect of school life.

#### Established strengths

- Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for pupils
- Strong church and school links
- Promotion of Christian values in school by all stakeholders

#### Focus for development

- Revision of the RE policy and schemes of work which will reflect a more coherent approach to the teaching and learning of other chosen faiths as well as Christianity
- Lesson plans to be more explicit in differentiating between AT1 (learning about religion) and AT2 (learning from religion) activities

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

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good in meeting the needs of all learners. Personal development and well being shows some outstanding features. The children, whatever their abilities or aptitudes, are clearly very happy and proud of their school. In welcoming their new headteacher to school, one pupil wrote, "St Thomas' is a very welcoming and caring school. Each and everyone is special, whoever they may be." Mutual respect between teachers and learners is evident in the way they treat each other, children knowing that their ideas and viewpoints are sought and acted upon. An outstanding example of this occurred after the death of a pupil last year. In consultation with the child's parents and through fundraising activities they organised themselves, the children raised sufficient money to create a sensory garden as a memorial for this pupil. The School Council has shared work with the headteacher on developing a clearly understood behaviour policy. Any behaviour issues that occur are dealt with calmly and quickly, in a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness. Inclusion is an important feature of the school with individual achievements in work, effort and behaviour being regularly recognised. Pupil questionnaires indicate how safe and secure children feel within the school environment. Social, moral and cultural development is an outstanding feature. Links with children from Burkino Fasso in Africa have been established. Care for others is seen in the school sponsoring a Ugandan child's education. Awareness of the needs of others as a high priority in school as is demonstrated in fundraising activities for cancer and British Heart Foundation charities. Pupils visit elderly residents in the community to talk to them and sing carols. They are always encouraged to take responsibility for a variety of roles both inside and outside of school. The school

environment is used very well to encourage spiritual development. The school's mission statement which reflects a strong commitment to the Christian ethos is prominently displayed in the entrance hall and copies of the parish magazine indicate the strong school and church links that exist. Every classroom has its own Christian display or focus area which is used for class worship and times of reflection. At present, the school does not have a cross or any other Christian symbol on the outside of the building as a way of emphasising the distinctively Christian nature of the school.

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

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good. Collective worship is recognised as fundamental to school life and takes place in both whole school and classroom settings. All staff are fully involved in both whole school acts of collective worship, led by the headteacher and the vicar, and in organising their own classroom worship times. Pupils are very responsive and eager to take part in both whole school worship and in the classroom. The confidence with which pupils respond to both whole school and classroom collective worship is very good. They write their own prayers, lead action songs and older pupils organise classroom worship. Respect for the faith position of all pupils is shown. Pupils' awareness and understanding of the Anglican faith and practice is developed by the vicar in his weekly act of collective worship. He uses parts of the Anglican liturgy and the children make the appropriate verbal responses in accordance with the different church seasons. The impact this has on learners is evident in some classroom collective worship where the same pattern of prayer and response is used. Christian celebrations are marked with services in church, as at Easter and Christmas. Understanding of the wider Anglican church and its practices are also provided both locally and from other parts of the world. Examples of this are visits to Blackburn Cathedral for an Ascension Day service and the Priory in Lancaster for Advent by older pupils in the school. A South African bishop has also visited the school and talked to children about his churches there.

#### **How effective is the religious education?**

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good. In a recent analysis of assessed work pupils achievement in both the AT1 and AT2 aspects of the subject showed a good level of achievement in both key stages. There is more confidence assessing AT1 (learning about religion) activities than in AT2 (learning from religion). However, the AT2 aspect of RE is clearly present in lessons. There are a good variety of teaching and learning approaches which give children opportunity to respond in different ways both in written work and orally. Visits to the church also enhance RE provision. Recent examples are where the vicar conducted a mock' baptism service and when pupils explored the different Christian features inside the church. The vicar plays an active role in RE lessons in school too. He has been interviewed about his calling to Christian ministry and explained to children about the different books of the Bible. RE clearly does have a special place in the school curriculum, as is stated in the school prospectus. Children enjoy the subject and this is reflected in class displays and their responsiveness in RE lessons. It is evident that effective learning takes place, particularly when Christianity is taught. Staff are currently looking at ways of adding to existing schemes of work to develop work in the other major religions studied.

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

The leadership of the school by the headteacher, leadership team and governors is good. The Christian vision for the school is both shared and actively promoted. St Thomas' school is characterised by the strong links it has with the church and many of the governors are also members of the parochial church council. They ensure that the Christian basis of the school is maintained. Some take an active role in collective worship. The children are encouraged to participate in activities organised by the church, such as decorating the church for its Flower Festival and Maypole dancing at the Church fete. The Christian ethos is fully supported by all staff who recognise the headteacher's commitment to this, although she has only been in the school for nine months. The headteacher's own description of her role as a 'listening head' is well

justified. All stakeholders know that their ideas and views are welcomed and they are supported. The school council is particularly proud of its role in helping develop a behaviour code of conduct for the school. Parents are also very happy with the school as is seen by the number of pupils transferring to the school, particularly in key stage 2, because of the caring Christian attitudes. One parent commented "My child has only been in the school for one week and I'm very impressed by the caring attitude I have seen. A special prayer of welcome was said for him in collective worship. He was very touched by that." Another said, "I can't believe how spiritual my children are and it's all down to the school." The school is well placed to develop even further as a church school. The headteacher has included Religious Education and Church and Community links as key areas in the school development plan.

SIAS report July 2006 Garstang St Thomas CE School Kepple Lane, Garstang, Preston,  
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