

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Knowlesley Road

Darwen

BB3 2JA

Diocese: Blackburn

LA: Blackburn

Dates of inspection: 20th June 2006

Date of last inspection: 2000

School's Unique reference number: 119456

Headteacher: Miss Margaret Mitchell

Inspector's name and number: Miss Heather Starkie

School context

St Barnabas Church of England Primary School draws most of its pupils from the densely populated Marsh House area of Darwen. A significant percentage of the school population are from socially deprived backgrounds. There are 153 children on roll and most of the children are of White British ethnic origin. Currently the school is experiencing a falling roll situation due to the changing make up of the local population.

Summary Judgement

This is a good church school. It has a distinctively Christian character which permeates all aspects of school life and impacts on all members of the school community. Christian principles and values are promoted effectively and underpin the strong Christian ethos which is evident within the daily life of the school.

Established strengths

- Christian principles and values which are promoted effectively within school and are evident in the children's attitudes to learning and their relationships with each other
- Positive relationships between all members of the school community which are based on Christian values
- Clear whole school vision of the Headteacher and Leadership team and their commitment in promoting the Christian ethos and the Christian faith within school

Focus for development

- To improve standards of attainment throughout the school within RE to better match standards achieved in other subject areas and to ensure children are sufficiently challenged
- To implement more structured school self evaluation procedures within RE to ensure standards of learning and teaching are further developed and are consistent across the school
- To develop whole school self evaluation procedures to include a review of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school

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

The way in which the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners is good. The Christian ethos permeates throughout the whole school with Christian values promoted well both through the curriculum as well as in the general day to day organisation and school routines. The school is friendly and welcoming. There is a caring and supportive atmosphere in school enabling children to feel happy, safe and secure. Christian principles and values are evident in the children's attitudes to learning and in their relationships with each other. The children are very polite and well mannered and they show care and consideration towards each other. Behaviour in school is good. Effective reward systems are in place, encouraging positive recognition of good work and good behaviour, which contributes to children's moral development. Children feel valued and special. Work is celebrated through displays within classrooms and around school. There is a weekly "Celebration of Achievement Assembly" during which children's achievements are celebrated and shared with the whole school. The Christian character of the school is evident within the school environment. The entrance area of the school displays Christian signs and symbols as well as the school's Mission Statement and School Creed. There is also a "Prayer Tree" which enables children to share, in prayer, their

thoughts, worries and concerns with other members of the school community. A range of fundraising activities take place on a regular basis, enabling children to show respect and consideration towards those who are less fortunate.

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

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good. Worship has a significant impact on promoting the Christian character of the school and the spiritual and moral development of the whole school community. Worship provides the children with a range of experiences including times of quiet reflection enhancing children's spiritual development. Worship also contains important links to the Anglican liturgy including opening sentences and closing prayers enabling children to experience Anglican traditions. The planning of worship is structured with clear, Christian based themes. All staff are involved in the leading of worship and representatives from St. Barnabas' Church, including the vicar, also lead worship within school on a regular basis. Time for worship at the beginning of each day is an important feature of school life and is respected and enjoyed by the children. During worship children listen attentively, respond well to prayers and sing with enjoyment. Although there are good links with the church, the school attends church for worship on a limited number of occasions.

How effective is the religious education?

The effectiveness of Religious Education within school is satisfactory. Although there are some strengths within the teaching of RE, there are also some significant areas for development. RE is seen as an important element of the school curriculum and the RE Subject Leader has a clear vision of her role in supporting the teaching of RE within school. The RE curriculum follows the Blackburn Diocesan syllabus and is largely Christian based, reflecting the Christian character of the school. RE is taught in a variety of ways including some quality discussion which contributes towards the children's spiritual development. There is currently no monitoring and evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching within RE lessons. Standards of attainment within RE are often below those in other subject areas and children's achievement is often below expectations. Standards of teaching and learning are not consistent across the school with some significant areas of concern. Children are not always challenged within RE lessons, particularly in terms of their written work. There is no evidence of constructive marking within the children's RE work to enable them to reflect on their work and to extend their thinking. A good, structured system of assessment has recently been implemented and is developing well. Studies of other world faiths are taught as part of the RE curriculum. During the inspection one class re-enacted and celebrated the Passover meal, re-enforcing through discussion and active participation various aspects of Jewish beliefs as had been taught in previous lessons.

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 Headteacher and Leadership team have a distinctive Christian vision for the school and are effective in developing and promoting the Christian ethos and Christian character of the school. There is a good team spirit which exists within school which helps both staff and children feel they are part of a caring and supportive community. Staff feel valued and share the leadership team's sense of purpose. The school's Mission Statement and School Creed clearly reflect the Christian foundation and character of the school. The school operates an "Open Door" policy for parents to raise issues of concern. There is an effective School Council which enables the leadership team to gather children's views of the school. Children's views are listened to and, where appropriate, acted upon and the children feel their suggestions are valued and taken seriously. The Governors are becoming more involved in school self evaluation and school improvement planning. Whole school self evaluation, particularly within RE, needs to be developed in order to enhance children's achievements and standards of attainment within this subject area. Opportunities to review the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school also needs to be included within school self evaluation procedures. This will enhance current provision and will enable the school to develop further to become even more effective as a church school.