

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Cuthbert's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Alban's Road

Darwen

Lancashire

BB3 0HY

**Diocese: Blackburn**

Local Authority: Blackburn with Darwen

Headteacher: Mrs Janet Grime

Inspection date: 7<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2006

Date of previous inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2004

Inspector: Georgina Lewis

#### Summary Judgement

St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School is a good church school with some outstanding features. The good behaviour and caring attitudes of the pupils is an illustration of the way in which the school's Christian ethos underpins all aspects of school life.

#### School context

St Cuthbert's School is situated in the town of Darwen. The school has eight classes including a special education resource facility (SERF) for children with severe moderate learning difficulties. Recent new building in the area has increased the number of pupils entering at Key stage 2. Pupils arrive at the school with below average attainment in the Foundation stage and leave at the end of Key stage 2 with average levels of attainment overall. There are now more pupils achieving higher than average levels at the end of Key stage 2. The number of pupils in the school's special unit affects the overall standard attained.

#### Established strengths

- The quality of leadership and management of the headteacher in supporting the school's Christian ethos.
- The provision of education for pupils with severe moderate learning difficulties.
- The good behaviour of the pupils and calm atmosphere in the school.

#### Focus for development

- Introduce a more formal evaluation of Collective Worship
- Improve the assessment of pupils' work in religious education

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

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners well. There is a number of signs and symbols around the school which clearly show its Christian foundation; the cross at the entrance and smaller crosses in or immediately outside classrooms together with posters expressing how "Jesus loves you....". Displays of pupils' work around the school clearly show the pupils' respect for each other and the community in which they live and also the respect given by staff to their work. Pupils' work done as part of religious education teaching is prominently displayed in the Hall. The calm and ordered atmosphere of the school is immediately apparent when entering the building. Children work co-operatively and respond well to the positive reinforcement of their efforts. Achievements are celebrated at a weekly assembly. A recently established web site reinforces the school's Christian character.

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

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good. It provides a calm and reflective start to the day. The quality of collective worship is good, it is well planned and well organised. The head, vicar, curate and members of the Christian community lead worship. The setting for worship is impressive; there is a large cross with two large candles set against a purple backcloth. The impact on pupils is one of reverence and respect for the occasion. Pupils are regularly involved in a variety of ways: setting up the hall for whole school worship, lighting the candles, reading prayers and interacting with the leader through question and answer. Pupils are also involved in drama associated with the stories being used. The pattern for worship includes a story, a time for reflection,

prayer and song. Pupils are very familiar with this pattern and know the Lord's Prayer, the School Prayer and several songs without the need for overhead projection slides. Pupils' entrance to and exit from the hall is exceptionally orderly and their attentiveness during worship is excellent. Acts of collective worship are an integral part of the prayer life of the school and make a valuable contribution to spiritual, social and moral development of pupils. The 'Book of Prayers' by pupils in the special unit is an exceptional example of the way in which the spiritual life of pupils is encouraged and developed. The themes and stories used in collective worship are carefully selected and reflect the Church's calendar as well as taking into consideration more secular and global situations. At present, the evaluation of worship is undeveloped in a formal way; evaluation is through pupils' comments to staff and in 'Circle Time'.

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

The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory. The teaching, in lessons of religious education, is good. Teachers prepare and plan well for the needs of pupils. Work seen in pupils' books is regularly marked, but comments are generally about attitude. More focused comment in books need to be made about skills and knowledge acquired. An appropriate amount of time is allocated for the teaching of religious education. The Blackburn Diocesan syllabus provides a good foundation for the planning and preparation of religious education. Letters about the topics in all subject areas provide good guidance each term for parents, enabling them to help to their children more effectively. Reports to parents do state how well pupils have progressed. Pupils enjoy religious education. In a Year 1 lesson observed, studying the calling of the disciples, a variety of activities was provided including fishing. In a lesson seen in the special unit, where pupils were looking at special books, the Quran was treated reverently. The achievement of pupils in religious education is satisfactory. There is progression each year in the topics chosen and pupils' work shows development in understanding. When opportunities for more independent work are given pupils respond well.

#### **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, by the headteacher is outstanding. The school's Christian purpose is clearly communicated to parents. The headteacher is an excellent role model and together with Foundation governors works to maintain a distinctive Christian vision for the school. There is a strong relationship between school and church. The vicar or his curate lead worship each week and members of the governing body report back to the Parochial Church Council. In the recent past, when the church was undergoing major repairs, the school was used by the church for Sunday services. A parish drama group uses the school hall for performances and contributes to the school's finances. The headteacher makes regular contributions to the parish magazine. The school development plan identifies the need to develop the role of co-ordinators of foundation subjects; religious education is included as one of the areas to be dealt with. The headteacher monitors all subjects including religious education through pupils' books and teachers' planning and preparation. The relationships between staff and pupils are very good, especially so in the special unit. Pupils are caring, friendly, open and honest in their exchanges with adults and each other. The pupils' behaviour and attitude to school is very good as demonstrated in their conduct around the school.