

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bardney Church of England and Methodist Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Henry Lane,
Bardney,
Lincs
LN3 5XJ

Diocese: Lincoln

Local Authority: Lincolnshire

Date of inspection: 2nd July 2007

Date of last inspection: October 2001

School's unique reference number: 120589

Headteacher: Mr. Barry Bensley

Inspectors' names and numbers: Rev John Pryor 154 and Neville Norcross 403

School context

The school is located within the small rural village of Bardney. It serves the local community together with four other villages. The socio-economic background of the children is mixed. The number of children eligible for free school meals is less than 10% which is below the national average. The great majority of children are white British. The school has a joint, Methodist/Anglican foundation and the two churches currently provide three foundation governors. There has been considerable disruption to the leadership of the school during the past three years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bardney Church of England and Methodist Primary School as a Church of England school are inadequate

The school has yet to develop a distinctive Christian character both in the way it looks and in the content of the curriculum. There is an understanding of the importance of daily worship, religious education and the quality of relationships but these aspects are not often linked with the school's Christian foundation. There is now a commitment amongst senior leaders and governors to evaluate the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school in order to provide a firm foundation for school improvement.

Established strengths

- The involvement and commitment of the Anglican and Methodist clergy who have provided positive Christian leadership within the school
- The commitment of the school governors to developing the Christian character of the school through a rigorous programme of self-evaluation

Focus for development

Involve all members of the school community in evaluating and developing the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school.

Explore ways in which the quality of relationships between both pupils and adults can be characterised by Christian values; principally forgiveness and reconciliation

Find ways for collective worship to provide opportunities for the whole school community to explore, share and celebrate its values.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is inadequate at meeting the needs of all learners

Most pupils, and especially the more able, do not fulfil their potential and do not find learning to be exciting or challenging. They say that their concerns are listened to and that staff respond positively to them. However, the pupils' attitudes towards school are generally negative and lacking in enthusiasm. The quality of relationships between the pupils is usually good. The "Golden Time" rewards are working effectively and the children can articulate the positive benefits of this programme. The weekly achievements assembly at which positive behaviour and other achievements are celebrated supports this scheme. The pupils have a developing understanding of right and wrong. They are very conscientious in their support of a number of charities. These responses, however, are not related to Christian values.

The pupils are not able to talk about those Christian values which are important to their church school. They are not aware of ways in which the school, as a church school, is

making a difference to their lives. Parents understand that it is a church school but only see this in terms of occasional visits to church. There are very few symbols of the Christian faith to be found either in the entrance hall or around the classrooms. Similarly, there is a lack of displays of children's work relating to the school's Christian character.

There are only very limited opportunities for children's spiritual development. Prayer is not prominent in the life of the school and there are very few occasions when children can experience a time of quiet reflection. Religious education has been neglected due to the recent upheaval in staffing. As a result, it is failing to make an impact on children's spiritual development and the distinctive Christian character of the school. The tasks which are set for the children are sometimes undemanding and do not enable them to reflect on challenging issues or apply the teaching to their own lives.

There is now a growing understanding of the need to evaluate the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school. The development of a Christian ethos is recognised by governors and senior leaders as a good foundation upon which other improvements can be built.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

A regular and varied programme of collective worship is provided. It is delivered with enthusiasm and is generally suited to the interests and spiritual capacities of most of the pupils. The weekly involvement of the clergy, both Methodist and Anglican, who cooperate well with one another in planning and delivering this contribution, is welcomed by the pupils. Their response to other occasions of collective worship in general is at best muted except on those occasions, such as the act of worship observed, where they are involved. Collective worship has a clear Christian content and good use is made of the school prayer, which was devised by the School Council with the support and advice of the Methodist Minister (one of the Foundation Governors) Visiting clergy are currently introducing the Lord's Prayer so that the pupils will be able to use it with understanding. This development is not being picked up in Religious Education; and this is an example of significant weaknesses in the provision and subsequent impact of collective worship.

Firstly, the planning of worship is not coordinated between visitors and the school; this is a decline from recent practice, and restricts the coherence of the programme of worship. Secondly staff do not regularly attend collective worship. This weakens its effectiveness very significantly as teachers are unaware of what experiences their pupils are having, nor can they plan for further development of issues raised, understandings deepened and skills developed. The sharing of a common, Christian, vision for the school and the building up of a desired ethos for the whole school community is severely hampered. In the school's current situation this is an important loss. This situation also means that the staff are deprived of an opportunity for professional development and shared experience in delivering collective worship or similar whole school activities.

Use is made of the Church building for seasonal acts of worship, but it is subject to the vagaries of the weather, the use of the Methodist Chapel by the school is severely limited by its size. A good development has been the inauguration of a Founders' Day service towards the end of Spring. This is seen, especially by the clergy, as introducing the pupils to the two traditions supporting the school as well as their common Christian heritage. Through the attendance of Year 6 pupils at the annual Church Schools' Festival in Lincoln Cathedral they are made aware of the breadth of Christianity and the size of the Church Schools' family in the Diocese.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is inadequate

The leadership of the school does not pay sufficient attention to its distinctive character as an Anglican/Methodist school in its self-evaluation and other documentation. This supports the school's evaluation of leadership and management as inadequate and the inspection findings confirm this judgement. The aims of the school and how they are to be worked out in practice are not spelt out in documentation such as the school prospectus. The leadership and management of the school are unclear about all that it means to be a Church of England/Methodist school. The lack of discussion between senior staff, teachers, governors and support staff about the school's aims, purpose and functions weakens its sense of unity, and leads to fragmented relationships. This in turn leads to a lack of consistency and

purpose in management structures, in teaching and learning, as well as in the care and guidance of the pupils.

The good efforts of individuals are often brought to nothing by the lack of coherence and purpose that the failure of a shared vision brings about. On the other hand the close cooperation and the growth of an ecumenical approach by representatives of the two churches, for example when working for improvements in collective worship and support for religious education, provide a good example of how effective such working together can be. In the same way the renewed vigour of the governing body and its closer involvement with the direction of the school is beginning to show ways in which both leadership and management can improve.

The school has made use of support from the local authority and the Diocesan Education Centre, but there has often been a selectivity in the way in which it has been followed up. This was clear in the way in which significant elements of the previous Section 23 report were not utilised by the leadership of the school.

The governing body has taken a renewed and positive approach to its duties so that there is reasonable hope that improvements in leadership and the development of the management of the school can take place. However it is dependent upon a number of factors such as new staff appointments, the outcomes of which cannot be known. Currently the Governors are cautiously optimistic that the members of the school community, two church communities and parents will work together for the improvement of the school making clarity about its aims a priority.

Bardney Church of England and Methodist Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Henry Lane, Bardney, Lincs LN3 5XJ July 2007