

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Belgrave Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Sussex Place  
Longton  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST3 4TP

#### **Diocese: Lichfield**

Local authority: Stoke-on-Trent  
Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
Date of last inspection: December 1<sup>st</sup> 2003  
School's unique reference number: 132730  
Headteacher: Mr Christopher Brislen  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Marianne Phillips

#### **School context**

Belgrave C of E (VC) Primary is a large urban school with 473 pupils on roll. It serves the parish of Dresden and is also on the edge of the parish of Blurton. It has strong links with both these churches. The majority of the pupils are drawn from the ethnic community and many of the pupils joining the Foundation Unit have English as an additional language. The head has been in post since the school opened 5 years ago. It was established from the amalgamation of two smaller schools.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Belgrave C of E (VC) Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The unity of the school community is very strong. Relationships are nurtured by clear Christian values that permeate every aspect of school life. The head's Christian witness, knowledge of his school family and commitment is clear. Everyone connected with the school passionately promotes the school motto of '**Courtesy, Consideration and Respect**' creating an atmosphere of racial harmony and social cohesion.

#### **Established strengths**

- The outstanding pupil achievement, as a direct result of the nurturing Christian atmosphere, which supports children's individual needs;
- The meaningful relationships binding all members of the school community through established Christian family values;
- Collective worship has a high status providing excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual development;
- The positive ethos that fosters a sense of worth in its pupils and encourages them to voice their opinions and take responsibilities as an important part of the school team;

#### **Focus for development**

- With the imminent closure of its mother church of Dresden, to work closely with the Blurton Team Ministry to establish a plan of action that will ensure the long term Christian distinctiveness of the school and the strong school links;
- To make more explicit the 'Anglican' tradition through school worship;
- To further develop the opportunities for prayer by engaging with the pupils and responding to their many very good ideas;
- To look for opportunities to establish areas of Christian focus within each class and around the school that highlight the Christian distinctiveness;;

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

All learners feel valued and special. They talk excitedly about their school and their enjoyment

in being an important part of its school family. The School Council, 'Peer Mediators' and 'yellow and blue hats' have very responsible parts to play in the daily functioning of the school. They strongly display their 'Golden Rule' of "Treat others the way you want to be treated" and confidently state "That's how the school works". One child over lunch shared that "we chose this school because we know there would be no racism, we would be able to pray and learn about things to do with the Bible". Christian values and respect for each other permeates the vibrant atmosphere. Pupils are confident and caring. "If someone really needs help you don't judge them, you step in and do something". Pupils make very good progress and are nurtured spiritually through the school's 'Values for Life' programme. Learners are able to relate sensitively to the feelings and beliefs of others. Conflicts are uncommon, but are dealt with effectively. The chair of governors and staff from all backgrounds spoke openly of their faith and their pride in being part of this caring community. Displays are colourful, exciting and provide a vehicle for the excellent RE work which is an important feature of the curriculum. The 'Spirituality' and 'Meditation' areas were well used throughout the day and children expressed the importance of prayer in their lives. All wished to have even more opportunities to pray, to write down their prayers, and have them featured within their classes. This is one of their very good ideas that would further enhance the spiritual dimension of this excellent church school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Worship is of vital importance. Children are excited about the experiences of worship. "I am looking forward to going to church tomorrow to share how Jesus died for us" and "I love the Lord's Prayer" are examples of how pupils relate and respond to worship. The act of collective worship witnessed was very well planned and inspiring. Learners and staff alike joyously engaged in a 'Tardis -like' journey back to Jerusalem, waved palms, shouted praises and sang in celebration of the coming of Christ. The school's aim to "show reverence to God" was achieved through the praise, prayer and reflection. The blessing by the curate brought the worship to a close, but the symbolism of the lighted candles, bread and wine remained as a focus as the pupils and staff left the hall. Questionnaires and scripts from pupil interviews show that they value worship and learn from it. All faiths are included and respected and the school feels that "faith is at the heart of school life – clear to all members and visitors alike". Parents are happy that there is an emphasis on learning about faith and belief. "It makes children more tolerant and helps to prepare them for living in society in the future". Also "sharing develops understanding and overcomes divisions". Parents are encouraged to attend worship and respond positively to their experiences. The school celebrates the main festivals of the church calendar taking the opportunity to attend Dresden Parish Church at least once a term. The school is working diligently to develop their Anglican Tradition through special weekly services, where traditional language, prayers and religious symbolism is designed to be distinctive, but as inclusive as possible for all participants.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

The Christian witness of the headteacher, foundation governors and staff give emphasis to the desire to promote a caring Christian vision for the school. The ethos statement, aims and values, slogan, 'Golden Rule' and symbolism "God keeps his promises" reinforces this. All other documentation and channels of communication e.g the school website articulate a clear Christian focus. The governors hold the school to account very well through 'Review and Strategy' meetings, discussions and observation of day to day practice. The school is well supported by the diocese through advice and training. A recent meeting with the diocesan adviser has led the school to review its 'Anglican' character and a number of proposals have begun to permeate worship e.g a service table, candles and responses which are having a very good affect on the Christian distinctiveness of the school. This is a planned focus for on-going development. The school actively and effectively canvasses the opinion of all its stakeholders and their views form an important part of their evaluation cycles. The school has excellent links with the community. Its inclusive values are clear. Part of its vision is to be "a rock in the community" it serves. There are very strong links with the local churches, which are a focus for future development with the proposed closure of Dresden Parish Church.