

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bishop Gilpin Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Lake Road
Wimbledon
SW19 7EP

Diocese: Southwark

School's Unique reference number: 102666

Date of inspection: 23 & 25 January 2008

Date of last inspection: October 2003

Head teacher: Robert Cargill

Chair of Governors: Elizabeth Broad

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number : Sue Jackson NSI 410

School context

Bishop Gilpin has two forms of entry. Pupils are largely from backgrounds which that are favourable socially and economically. The school is popular and over-subscribed with pupils mainly living locally. Around 30% are from minority ethnic backgrounds and approximately 50% from worshipping Anglican families. There are significant numbers of pupils from Muslim, Jewish and Hindu backgrounds. Although the number on the special needs register is lower than for similar schools, the number of statements of special educational need is higher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Gilpin Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Bishop Gilpin is an outstanding school where all members of the community are committed to its mission statement: '... we aim to provide for the spiritual development of each child based on Christian principles.' In practice, this is evident in the quality of relationships based on Jesus' teaching, the importance of prayer and worship and the vibrant learning environment where Christian values shape the curriculum and everyone feels respected and valued.

Established strengths

- the Christian vision of the head teacher and the inspirational way he leads and manages the school
- the challenging, supportive learning environment where high quality relationships, behaviour and motivation for learning are based upon Christian values and teaching
- the prominent place of Collective Worship in the life of the school characterised by the enthusiastic responses of the pupils
- the impact of Religious Education (RE) in the curriculum brought about by the creativity with which its teaching is planned, delivered and monitored resulting in high standards of achievement

Focus for development

- to build on the current good practice and embed the creative, cross curricular and engaging way in which the RE syllabus is delivered to pupils
- to re-vitalise and enrich the existing links with the two churches in the parish, as identified in the school's self evaluation process in order to communicate more of the work of the school to the worshipping communities of the two churches in the parish

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

With its distinctive Christian character at its heart, the school makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of all of its pupils. Pupils are highly motivated and rise to the challenge of the high expectations set by staff and their parents. Through RE and collective worship, they are taught that their uniqueness and differences are to be celebrated. They know that their opinions matter and consequently throughout the school children show confidence, enthusiasm and good behaviour. They are very clear about appropriate ways to treat each other, and in the words of a pupil in year five 'people get on with each other'. All pupils are familiar with school procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviours and bad behaviour is rare. There is an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding which engenders an ability to forgive without resentment. This is a thread which underpins the way adults relate to children and is revisited throughout the school as seen in planning for worship and RE. When reflecting upon what is distinctive about a church school as part of their self evaluation, the teaching staff wrote 'We need to make a distinction between our values at Bishop Gilpin and those of a good community school. The outcomes maybe the same in some ways. It is our approach which may be different and distinct.' Staff speak of their commitment to Christian teaching and the difference this makes to their approach. The Christian ethos of the school enriches the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding for all. Pupils and parents of all faiths and none feel welcomed and included and the school is chosen because of its Anglican status by parents of faiths other than Christianity. The support for charities is exceptional and pupils are particularly proud of the money they have raised for the Lunch Bowl Network. The environment is used extremely effectively to communicate the school's Christian ethos to all. The use of displays related to Christian teaching and to other faiths and the Christian symbols both in the classrooms and other areas of the school give a powerful message to everyone about the importance of the distinctive Christian character of the school.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding.

Bishop Gilpin School is a worshipping, spiritual community. Worship is a highly valued part of life in this school and is important to its pupils, staff and parents. The planning relates to the liturgical year and includes a variety of formats, groupings and visits to the churches in the parish. The head teacher, in his role as worship co-ordinator, is an inspiring leader and this results in enthusiastic responses from the pupils. Care is given to ensure that the worship is appropriate to the ages of the pupils present and includes an awareness of the need to provide for the spiritual development of staff as well as children. This was evident in the two acts of worship seen during the inspection. In the first, year five and six pupils were able to reflect on trusting in God at a level that would not have been possible if younger children had been present. The use of a weekly theme, and the way it is developed each day through bible stories and Jesus' teaching, concluding with whole school worship on a Friday, enables everyone to reflect on what they have learned during the week. On both occasions, pupils were calm and reflective, listening attentively to the music, singing enthusiastically and responding thoughtfully to questions. The strong visual focus enabled even the youngest foundation stage pupils to understand the development of the theme of 'trust and obey'. The pupils say that they enjoy the singing, stories, drama, music and 'visitors who inspire us'. They value worship; as a year four pupil said, 'It's a time when we meet up as a whole school'. Without Collective Worship 'It would be chaotic, it winds us down and gives us time to think and reflect.' said a year five pupil. When a group of key stage two pupils were asked about the importance of worship, they said 'we come together to pray.' Pupils asked about the difference between Bishop Gilpin and other schools said 'We learn about the Bible, go to church and pray in assemblies.' The lighting of a candle and the use of the introductory sentence by a pupil 'The Lord is in here' and response 'His Spirit is with us' by all present is a very powerful and inclusive way of introducing pupils to Anglican liturgy. Their understanding of Anglican faith and practice is particularly developed in key stage two through the termly school Eucharist. This is led by the pupils and is attended by many parents, who particularly commented on the inclusive nature of these occasions. During the course of my visit, the Vicar of St Mark's Church said 'The head teacher has the ability to construct worship that is both educational, spiritual and truly all age.' Members of the clergy team are regularly involved in leading collective worship. Prayers are also said at other times in the school day, in particular at the end of the day when there is a period of reflection. This was recently introduced and is already important to the pupils. One child in year one said, 'Reflection, it's my favourite part of the day!'

Religious Education is outstanding

RE is seen as vitally important by staff, pupils, parents and governors. As a result pupils achieve standards in line with the high standards achieved in core subjects, in both attainment targets, (learning about religion and learning from it). It is taught both discretely and in a cross curricular way, in particular during focused RE days. Planning is innovative and staff are enthusiastic about opportunities to be creative when planning lessons. Pupils are responsive and successful irrespective of their ability because of the variety of strategies that are used to enable them to develop their subject knowledge and to apply their learning to their every day lives. The subject is a popular part of the curriculum and pupils are keen to share their knowledge and understanding. They particularly enjoy learning about faiths other than their own and see the fact that there are pupils of a range of faiths in school as an opportunity to learn more from their peers. Parents are used as a resource to make the studying of faiths other than Christianity come alive. The Vicar of St Mark's comes into school to do some teaching and the head teacher is also involved. In the lessons seen, teachers' questioning skills, encouragement to draw parallels between faiths and to reflect on the relevance of the stories in the Bible for us today enabled pupils to apply their learning to their everyday lives. In year two, children were able to identify different purposes for prayer and then write meaningful 'sorry' prayers. Year four pupils used first hand experience of a puja tray to compare Puja with their own experiences of worship, focusing on their senses. All pupils were able to use a rich vocabulary and to express themselves articulately. In year six, the technique of 'hot seating' was brilliantly used to bring out the layers of meaning in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Thoughtful and searching questions were answered in an equally reflective way, displaying a level of maturity and understanding beyond the chronological age of the pupils. Teachers subject knowledge is good and they have an enthusiasm for RE that communicates to the pupils. The use of interactive white boards and real artefacts also ensures teaching is exciting and the pupil appreciate the value given to their written and art work through thoughtful and interactive displays. Excellent use is made of the skills of two higher level teaching assistants in the planning and teaching of RE, alongside the class teachers. This draws on their involvement as leaders of Sunday school and also provides fruitful links and continuity with the work with the younger members of the worshipping community at St Mark's Church. This developing initiative is a further example of the innovative and creative way the children at Bishop Gilpin learn about their faith and those of others. The subject leader carries out her role with energy and enthusiasm and is extremely effective. She has put appropriate strategies in place to track pupils' learning and assessments provide evidence that standards are as high as in the other core subjects. Teaching is also regularly monitored and evaluated by the subject leader. She is well qualified for the role and makes good use of diocesan support and expertise.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding.

The inspiring and strong leadership of the head teacher, supported by hard working staff and governors, ensures that the Christian vision of the school underpins everything that happens. This vision is demonstrated in the way all strive to do better and move forward based on a culture of self evaluation that is well embedded in the school's practice. The Christian vision is clearly articulated and subscribed to by all and all stakeholders contribute to putting it into practice. Evaluation involves everybody and pupils, parents and governors know that their opinions count and are acted upon. Members of the governing body provide an appropriate balance of encouragement, monitoring and challenge and are all committed to the centrality of worship and RE. The foundation governors in particular are proactive. A recent session about Christian ethos led by staff at the Diocesan Board of Education and a planned one for staff and governors about children's spirituality demonstrates a commitment to continual review and challenge. Recruitment and induction procedures for new staff ensure that the school's Christian character and mission are clearly understood. Thoughtful planning for worship demonstrates a concern for the spiritual development of staff. For example, a recent training day began with a period of reflection and governors meetings begin with prayer. Prayer permeates the life of the school and the development of spirituality is at the forefront. There are productive links with the two churches in the parish. However, these links have recently been the subject of review and reflection and a plan is in place to revitalise and strengthen these relationships in order to provide an opportunity for both worshipping communities to celebrate the work of the school. Parents are supportive of and involved in all aspects of school life. They appreciate all that is happening at Bishop Gilpin and describe the school as providing 'Christian teaching for our lives today'.

January 2008, SIAS report, Bishop Gilpin CE Primary, Lake Road, SW19 7EP