

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bishop Middleham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Bishop Middleham
Ferryhill
County Durham
DL17 9AL

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Durham
Dates of inspection: 21st September 2007
Date of last inspection: 2002
School's unique reference number: 114258
Headteacher: Mrs Lindsey Vollans
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jane Ackroyd 221

School context

This is a smaller than average sized village primary school, serving a mixed socio economic area. There are higher than average numbers of children with special needs. Pupils are taught in mixed age classes. There has been an unsettled period with staffing, however the leadership have worked hard to minimise the impact of this on learning.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Middleham as a Church of England school is good.

Children are well known and valued as individuals. It is a happy learning community where children make good progress in their spiritual, moral and social development alongside their academic work. Learners speak enthusiastically about their school. Relationships at all levels are good. The children are confident, welcoming people into their school. The Christian ethos underpins all that it does.

Established strengths

- A strong family atmosphere where children are cared for, supported, challenged and valued.
- The pupil's sense of collective responsibility and care for each other.
- Governors and most staff are strongly supportive of the Christian ethos.
- The commitment of staff and governors to the development of the whole child.
- The strength of relationships with the local clergy.
- The value placed on care for the individual at all levels.

Focus for development

- Change the focus from assembly to worship.
- All staff to attend all acts of collective worship.
- Ensure that Teaching and Learning in RE is developed in line with core subjects.
- Be explicit about the Christian values which the school teaches.

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

The school's Christian character is reflected in the good relationships which exist throughout the school community. Children, parents and staff are confident that they are listened to. When a training need is identified by any staff or governor efforts are made to provide appropriate support. The school council system provides excellent opportunities for social awareness. The pupils are happy, polite and confident, they enjoy coming to school. High quality, well designed displays enhance opportunities for spiritual development although opportunities for linking initiatives with Christian principles are missed, for example, a link

between Christian Stewardship and recycling. Staff are working in a range of areas in order to enable children to reach their potential. Children enjoy opportunities to reflect and feel that learning is “fun, like in conscience alley...,” “when what we do in English (WW2) links to Geography with mountains and RE with the Jews.” This is clearly a school in which implicit Christian values such as forgiveness, trust and valuing others are lived out, they are not however necessarily seen as Christian values. The children sometimes lack sufficient vocabulary to talk about Christianity. Charity fund raising reflects the care for others engendered by the school. There are opportunities for development of awareness of other faiths. Children with special needs or who are vulnerable are treated inclusively and through nurturing are developing well as individuals, despite low levels of available support, Breakfast Club provides an excellent start to the day “It is really good, you get good food and a chance to play.” The children feel a sense of responsibility towards each other. They feel secure that bullying is rare but will be dealt with if it happens and that if a child is sorry for poor behaviour they will get a fresh start. They are confident that good work and good behaviour is rewarded through a clear system. Children are aware of the recycling of paper through the school system and the annual clothing appeal for Air Ambulance is good for the planet and proud of their fund raising but are not clear on links to Christian teaching; these would be strengthened through emphasis on Christian stewardship/Gospel teaching. The improvement in SATs levels attained this summer shows how the positive steps taken recently are impacting on pupil attainment.

The effectiveness of the Religious Education is satisfactory

Religious Education is well taught, giving children an understanding of Christianity and some other world religions. The Diocesan syllabus is taught. Learners receive a broad, balanced curriculum, medium term planning is impressive, offering a range of activities and good progression, despite the challenge of differing combinations of year groups. The Coordinator, the Headteacher, has designed excellent end of module assessments to enable herself and other staff to build on this in short term planning. Pupils talented in spiritual development are identified “those able to articulate empathy,” however differentiation is mostly through outcome. Staff training in the teaching of RE is a recognised need and is planned for later this year. The subject has previously been under resourced, but a £200 grant has been obtained for resources and an amount is protected for RE from main budget. The school has a good selection of books and artefacts to support learning. High quality displays illustrating Christianity and other faiths are evident around the school, with books and artefacts to support learning. There was evidence of good questioning in lessons and in display “God had a plan for Moses, do you think he has a plan for you?” Good use is made of outside speakers. One parent stated “My children come home and tell me about Moses.” Historical staffing difficulties and the problems caused by poor writing skills generally in the school does impact on the rate of progress of pupils. Few can talk about anything learnt in previous modules of work “we learn more in assembly.” Progress has been made in these areas and strategies are in place to overcome the challenges. There is a good foundation laid for the teaching of RE to become excellent.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.

There is a plan for the worship year which includes major Christian festivals. Worship as a term tends not to be understood and is more familiarly known as assembly. Governors understand their responsibilities and are being encouraged to support school worship. Clergy and other visitors regularly lead collective worship. Rituals for worship are established; a lit candle is used as a focus during collective worship be this is in class or in the hall. Worship is inclusive and uses a range of approaches including circle time. All staff do not currently attend worship on a Monday or a Tuesday and this needs to be addressed; however a recent development has been staff taking class worship, this is working well. Children are proud of their part in worship, they particularly enjoy opportunities for active involvement “It was good when we were divided into groups to discuss...” “when we play the instruments to make music for assembly.” Evaluation of the effectiveness of worship is carried out in a range of ways, including some feedback from children. This does have an impact on future planning. There are opportunities for prayer before lunch and at the end of the day. The children are aware that this is part of what makes the school distinctively Christian. Many parents respond to the invitation to attend their child’s worship particularly at Christingle and Harvest which are held in the church. There are opportunities for both quiet reflection and involvement. One

child reflecting on worship stated "If you be quiet sometimes you can hear God."

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

The Headteacher, staff and governors have a good understanding of the community and a clear vision for the school based on Christian values. A strong Christian ethos is promoted consistently. Governors feel valued and that they have access to quality training as appropriate, this is helping them work together for the good of the children. This is a happy school where children are well cared for. Both adults and children speak enthusiastically about the school's character. The school's Christian purpose is clearly communicated to parents in the school brochure. It is implicit in other documentation such as policies. Behaviour is excellent, all staff have high expectations and work as role models. Pupils are proud to represent their peers on the school council and feel that their opinions are listened to. They help organise fund raising activities and are delighted that they have improved play facilities; they also have a mature attitude towards the work which they still need to do. The Action Plan identifies a need for a review of the mission statement. The school leaders are clearly aware of which areas need developing and have sensible plans in place to ensure that the vision for Bishop Middleham as an excellent Church of England School becomes a reality. Strong foundations are already laid.

SIAS report September 2007 Bishop Middleham C of E Primary School