

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bolton-le-Sands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mount Pleasant Lane
Bolton-le-Sands
Carnforth
Lancashire
LA5 8DT

Diocese:	Blackburn
Local authority:	Lancashire
Dates of inspection:	13 th March 2008
Date of last inspection:	22 nd – 24 th November 2004
School's unique reference number:	119521
Headteacher:	Mr Timothy Cross
Inspector's name and number:	Mr Mike Graham 286

School context

Bolton-le-Sands School is a voluntary aided Church of England School in a thriving village just south of Carnforth. Most children come from the village, but many travel from local towns and villages. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage. There are 293 children on roll of whom 30 are on the Special Educational Needs register. The school is very popular, but a fall in numbers of school-aged children locally has led to a slight decline in the school population in recent years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bolton-le-Sands as a Church of England school are outstanding

Bolton-le-Sands is an outstanding Church of England School with a very distinctive Christian ethos. There is strong and committed leadership with excellent support from the governing body and all members of staff. Links with Holy Trinity Church are very close and mutually beneficial. The school is extremely effective in its Christian witness.

Established strengths

- The excellent relationships within the family of the school
- The high quality of worship which makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of the children
- The clear Christian vision and inspirational leadership of the Headteacher, very well supported by the Senior Leadership Team and all staff and governors

Focus for development

- Include visits to non-Christian places of worship as part of the RE programme

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

The children are well mannered and friendly and know that they are special. A clear indicator of this is their calm self-confidence and respect for one another. This stems from the care given and example shown by all members of staff. The children are proud of their school and feel safe within it. The Christian ethos of the school has a positive impact upon the children's personal and academic development. The atmosphere around school is happy and secure with many opportunities for individuals and groups of children to take on responsibilities. Examples include the elected school council members, house captains, prefects, monitors

and buddies for the reception children in the autumn term. The provision of excellent child-centred teaching, fund raising activities and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs in sport, the arts and music enhance the personal development of each child. The Christian ethos of the school supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all the children very well. The link with a Ugandan Pastor and his church and local school is an excellent example. The children spoke with great enthusiasm about Pastor Gabriel's visits. Openness, honesty and care for one another stand out. A school Council member commented, "People are always there for you". Relationships between all members of the school community are based on Christian values. Within school there are bright and often interactive displays, which demonstrate the importance of worship and religious education and encourage reflection. A children's display based on 'I Believe' included the statement: "I believe that Jesus loves me. The Spirit is with me". There are effective areas of focus for worship in the hall, including a cloth-covered table, good quality photographs relevant to the theme, and a candle on a stand. The symbolism of the lit candle was used to great effect by the Vicar.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the life of the school. This is demonstrated by effective, well-planned worship and prayer times. Prayers are said at lunchtimes and at the end of each day with the children, and at staff and governor's meetings. The children are very positive about worship and value it highly. Comments made included references to the importance of silence, stories and the "enthusiasticness" and energy of worship leaders. On the inspection day children and staff took part with enthusiasm and sincerity. The singing was excellent, and the guitarists and Djembe (African drum) player enhanced the joyous singing of a Ugandan worship song. The interaction between the children and the Vicar was relaxed and yet reverent. The worship makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual awareness. The children are able to talk about their beliefs with confidence. A committee of staff and governors evaluate worship regularly in order to keep it 'fresh'. A parent said that the worship songs were "relevant and fun". Another parent commented that there are "natural every day references to Christianity". The clergy and the Headteacher work very closely together and links with the church in worship are strong. The major Festivals are celebrated in church and parents and governors are very supportive. The strong connection with the church and community is mutually beneficial. The two non-stipendiary ministers and other church members are often involved in school. A major project based on a study of the Creeds is in full flow and a school banner is being designed and made as an after-school club activity. Children are gently encouraged to be candidates for confirmation if they feel ready, and five times a year the Vicar celebrates Eucharist in school. The service is child centred. This and the frequent use of the church as a valued resource lead to a good understanding of Anglican faith and practice.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding

Standards in RE are very good. There is a welcome emphasis on Attainment Target 2, the impact of faith on a believer. Children are encouraged to think, discuss and interact to develop understanding of the issues. Learning and teaching in RE are very effective. In the observed session on 'hope and disappointment' an outstanding lesson was enhanced by the teacher's sharing of the impact of his Christian faith on his own life. The children responded to sensitive and skilful questioning with thoughtful answers that illustrated the impact of outstanding RE teaching. Planning and evaluation is very effective and includes the use of the recently compiled portfolio of assessed work. The children are very positive about RE and clearly understand and appreciate the value of studying faiths other than Christianity. One Y6 boy (from a mixed Y5/Y6 class) chose a study of Islam as his favourite piece of RE this year. There is excellent provision for the study of Islam and Judaism. At present the children do not have the opportunity to visit non-Christian places of worship. The involvement of the clergy and lay members of Holy Trinity combined with highly effective teaching by committed Christians ensures that Christianity retains a very high priority. RE

contributes very well to the spiritual and moral development of all learners, in large measure because of the excellent work on AT2 – the impact of faith.

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

The headteacher and governors promote a distinctive Christian vision for the school. The Vicar and non-stipendiary ministers are fully involved and the governors and church council give their full support. The headteacher's Christian conviction shines through all aspects of his leadership. The headteacher, deputy head, senior leaders and governors are very active in encouraging, monitoring and challenging the school community to realise this vision. The excellent mission statement begins: "We are a Church of England school. God is at the centre of our school life and His presence is found in all that we do". Staff and governors are fully involved in promoting and evaluating the school's distinctive Christian character. The School Council is excellent and is clearly functioning well. The children involved know that their contributions are valued and that their suggestions become part of school policy when appropriate. One girl commented, "We designed the new play areas and stopped dangerous handstands"! The vast majority of parents are delighted with the school, and all are given regular and varied opportunities for feedback. Following the tragic deaths of two pupils and a staff member, a small group of parents meets weekly to pray for the school. Throughout this difficult period, the strong and sensitive leadership of the head and clergy and the prayerful support uniting the community was crucial for the school.

SIAS report March 2008, Bolton-le-Sands C of E Primary, Carnforth, LA5 8DT