

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Cronton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Smithy Lane,
Cronton,
Widnes,
Cheshire.
WA8 5DF

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Knowsley MBC
Dates of inspection: 13th December, 2007
Date of last inspection: March 2004
School's unique reference number: 104449
Headteacher: Mrs Sylvia Thomson
Inspector's name and number: Miss Heather Starkie – NS 179

School context

Cronton Church of England School and community nursery is situated in Cronton village, on the outskirts of Widnes. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, with learning and/or physical difficulties or of ethnic minority heritage is below average. The building has been extended and upgraded in recent years. The headteacher on her appointment last term created a new leadership team. The school serves as a Mission Church for the local community.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cronton as a Church of England school are good.

A very distinctive Christian ethos permeates all areas of school life. Christian principles and values of love, care and respect are evident in the children's attitudes to their learning and their relationships with each other. The school and church communities work very closely alongside each other and are "one family", working together to foster the all round development of each individual child within a supportive, Christian environment.

Established strengths

- The way in which the school promotes Christian principles and values.
- The strong family ethos and the feeling of mutual respect and support between the school and the local church community.
- The promotion of children's spiritual development through worship, RE and through other curriculum areas.
- The commitment of the leadership and management to the development of the Christian ethos and the promotion of the Christian faith.

Focus for development

- To implement the new Diocesan syllabus for RE.
- To refine procedures for assessing children's work in RE and to ensure they are used consistently across the school.

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

There is a strong, distinctive Christian ethos which permeates all aspects of school life. Christian principles and values are promoted effectively and have a positive impact on the personal and social development of the children. The message that the school has a strong Christian foundation is portrayed very well for all to see through displays around the school. Worship displays successfully promote spiritual development. The prayers, sentences and questions raised by them allow children to think and to reflect. There is a warm and

welcoming family atmosphere. All relationships within the school community are characterised by Christian care and concern for others. Staff encourage all children to develop as individuals, enabling them to achieve their full potential within a supportive, Christian environment. The Learning Mentor provides particularly effective support and he has established a very good relationship with the children and their families. Children with special educational needs are supported well and all children feel valued and special. Children's spiritual development is outstanding. Many good opportunities are provided for them to experience times of stillness and quiet and to reflect across all curriculum areas. Children's work and achievements are celebrated through effective displays within classrooms and around school. The weekly "Star Badge Assembly" provides good opportunities to acknowledge children's successes, both in and outside school life. A variety of roles, including looking after the younger children at playtimes and lunchtimes, allow older children to learn to take responsibility for others as well as themselves. Children are polite and well mannered. They have a sound understanding of right and wrong and clear rules are laid down for them to follow in order to encourage good behaviour. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme is placed within a structured Christian context and gives good support for personal development. The children organise a range of fundraising activities on a regular basis, enabling them to show respect and consideration towards those who are less fortunate. The school enhances children's cultural development by providing opportunities to explore the traditions and beliefs of other cultures. Other world faiths are studied as part of the RE curriculum which gives different opportunities for them to understand and appreciate cultural diversity.

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

Worship has a significant impact on promoting the Christian character of the school and developing children's knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. It is an important feature of school life and is respected and enjoyed by the children. The school hall is used as a Mission church within the local community and therefore the setting and ambiance for school worship are excellent. A good range of experiences are provided, including stories, times of prayer and opportunities for quiet reflection. Children always listen attentively. They respond well to prayers and sing with enthusiasm and clarity. Effective use was made of sign language during the singing of "The Spirit lives to set us free". The main Christian festivals are celebrated and the worship pattern follows very clear, Christian themes. Worship leaders plan specific content within each of the themes carefully. This is then appropriately recorded and evaluated. Children are also involved on occasions in the planning, leading and evaluation of worship. Elements of Anglican liturgy are incorporated well into the worship. This successfully helps to develop children's understanding of Anglican faith and practice. Good opportunities for the promotion of spiritual development are provided within worship. This was very well illustrated within whole school worship on the theme of "Light" led by the headteacher and the vicar. The use of quiet, reflective music together with the inclusion of individual prayers and reflection gave children very good opportunities to develop spiritually. Close links between the school and the local church community are used to effect. Church and school are seen as one family, working together and supporting each other. The vicar is extremely committed to and very supportive of the work of the school. She regards herself as "school chaplain", ministering to the needs of staff and governors as well as to the children and their parents. She makes the time to lead school worship each week and supports work within RE. There is a termly, whole school Eucharist and the school takes the lead at Harvest and Nativity Services on Sundays. This gives them a good opportunity to see their school open to the wider worshipping community. The school makes an annual visit to St Luke's Church, Farnworth, the "mother" church which helps them to understand something of the history of the Anglican church in the area.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Children demonstrate a good knowledge of the Christian faith and are able to express their understanding in a mature and respectful way. Plans are in place to implement the new, Diocesan syllabus in the near future. Studies of other world faiths supplement units of work within the RE curriculum, enhancing children's knowledge and understanding of other cultures and traditions. However, this is not yet fully integrated in a structured or creative way

into the whole school curriculum plan for RE. Teaching and learning are effective and staff have a good subject knowledge. Standards of attainment are good and are in line with standards achieved in other curriculum areas. Procedures for assessing children's work are at an early stage of development, but need to be embedded fully and used consistently across the school. RE is taught in a variety of ways. Good use is made of drama, shared discussion, role play and practical activities. These approaches to learning help to make lessons both fun and interactive. In a Key Stage 1 lesson effective use was made of ICT. Children were encouraged to think about ways in which, as Christians, they are able to share the good news of the birth of Jesus. The lesson was also very practical with the children making Christingles, which helped to develop their understanding of the symbolism of this popular Christian artefact. Within Key Stage 2 excellent questioning skills were demonstrated, encouraging children to think and to reflect. Effective use was made of "talk partners" to enable children to share and to discuss ideas. The Subject Leader for RE, has a very good understanding of her role in supporting the teaching of RE across the school. She has a good overview of areas of strength within the subject as well as areas for further development in order to maintain and enhance standards of work.

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

The headteacher and leadership team have a clear, distinctive Christian vision and are fully committed to developing and promoting the Christian ethos and character of the school. The mission statement and aims reflect the Christian foundation and Christian principles and values underpin the work of the school. The very good team spirit which exists helps staff and children to feel part of a caring and Christian community. Governors are very involved in the life of the school. They provide challenge as well as support for the headteacher and leadership team and are effective in ensuring the Christian foundation is reflected and promoted within the daily life of the school. An evaluation of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school has been undertaken and areas for further development identified. These have been included within the whole school's action plans and school improvement plans. Parents are very supportive. They appreciate the way in which the school promotes Christian principles and values and provides a caring, Christian environment, where children are happy and enjoy their learning. The school works hard to include the children in many of the decision making processes where appropriate. There is an established and effective School Council which enables the leadership team to gather children's views. Children feel their suggestions are valued and are taken seriously.