

Newton Bluecoat Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Lane,
Newton with Scales,
Preston. Lancashire
PR4 3RT

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: Thursday 12th November 2009

Date of last inspection: 13th October 2006

School's unique reference number: 119805

Headteacher: Mr J. Bird

Inspector's name and number: Mr Stephen Paul Adnitt 590

School context

The school is an average size Church of England primary school with currently 203 pupils on roll. Currently 99% of pupils are white British with English as first language. A low proportion of children are eligible for free school meals (7.1%) and the percentage of pupils with Special Educational Needs is also low (8.4%). The school attracts pupils from a wide and largely rural area.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Newton Bluecoat School as a Church of England school are good

Newton Bluecoat School is a happy school that meets pupils' personal, social, emotional and spiritual needs very well. Christian values are at the core of all aspects of school life. The school has a distinctive Christian ethos which is reflected in its day to day work. All members of staff and pupils feel valued and cared for.

Established strengths

- The well led acts of worship that are at the centre of school life
- Good relationships within the school that are firmly based on Christian principles
- The good behaviour of the children

Focus for development

- Involve all governors and staff in developing the process of evaluating Newton Bluecoat as an effective church school
- Improve the assessment of RE work so that it is of consistently good quality throughout the school
- Improve the parents' understanding of what it means to be a part of a church school family

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

The school's strong Christian ethos enables and encourages the strong partnership that exists between pupils, staff, parents, the church and the wider community. This is characterised by the pupils' good behaviour and the Christian care that exists within and between all members of the school family. Pupils get on well together and feel part of a functional Christian family. Strong emphasis is placed on moral development clearly based on Christian values. Pupils show respect, acceptance and understanding of others. The school gives strong commitment to the development and potential of the whole child, as expressed in the mission statement, and rooted in the belief that each person is made in God's image. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are happy, encouraged and supported in school. Pupils feel valued and special. They are proud of their school and speak confidently about why it is special to them. One girl, a member of the school council remarked, "This is a good school that helps me do my best". Feedback from pupils and parents is overwhelmingly positive. Parents value the school highly. One parent commented,

“This school is very friendly; it’s very much a family school. My children are very happy here”. All stakeholders support and encourage the church school distinctiveness. Displays are prominent and bright and give good support to the pupils’ spiritual, cultural and moral development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship reflects the school’s distinctive Christian character and is an important part of school life. Pupils enjoy worship and display positive attitudes to it. They participate well. A range of hymns and songs is used, and pupils sing well with enthusiasm. Pupils, staff and the wider school family gain inspiration and spiritual growth from worship in school. The two acts of worship observed involved all the pupils. They helped to lead the worship and were clearly moved by the experience and talked freely about what it meant to them. Time is set aside for quiet personal reflection and prayer. This has a positive impact on pupils’ good spiritual and moral development. The pupils’ understanding of worship is developed well by the range of worship styles that they are able to experience. The priest, Father Giles, visits weekly to lead Eucharist. This is a more formal service for the older children and more relaxed for the younger pupils. The Eucharist engages the children well in traditional Anglican practice, and they are respectful and understand its significance for Christians. The format of the Eucharist service is in contrast to the less Anglican but clearly Christian worship provided at other times. The Key Stage 1 worship that was observed engaged the children. They were attentive, interested and clearly excited by the worship. Children make good progress in their spiritual development and reflect a sense of wonder and awe about God’s creation. The school also involves pupils in the wider life of the church community offering opportunities for them to be involved in events such as Parade Sunday, Education Sunday, Harvest and Confirmation.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Religious education is predominantly Christian based, reflecting the Christian character of the school. Around 20% of RE time is given to the teaching of Judaism and Islam. RE is regarded by all members of the school community as an important part of the school curriculum. Teachers have introduced special RE areas in classrooms as a focus for class worship, teaching and learning. Records of children’s attainment are kept in the form of evaluations of lessons and activities in teacher’s own plans. Portfolios of children’s work are also kept for each year group. The co-ordinator monitors teachers’ planning on a regular basis, talks to pupils and checks pupils’ books termly. Pupils’ progress and achievement are reported in the school end of year reports. Pupils use religious vocabulary well and express and explain their own beliefs. Pupils enjoy RE and work hard and generally behave well in lessons. Pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity and are keen to offer their opinions, and other pupils are keen to listen. RE is taught, using a range of styles, to satisfactory standards throughout the school. Improving assessment of RE throughout the school is an important action in the current SEF in order to make significant improvements in RE standards in the future.

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

The headteacher is a purposeful and dedicated Christian leader who has a clear vision for further improving Newton Bluecoat as a distinctive church school. The headteacher’s vision for the school is shared by staff. All staff and governors clearly support the Christian ethos and life of the school. Although the Governing body are supportive and hard working, they have yet to be fully involved in developing the process of evaluating Newton Bluecoat as an effective church school. The headteacher has begun to use the National Society self-evaluation framework and this now needs to be developed fully to involve all stakeholders. Pupils’ and parents’ views are sought and this strengthens the school as a caring inclusive Christian family community. There are good working partnerships with parents who are largely supportive of the school’s Christian vision and aims. The school council has an important role in the life of the school. The children’s views are taken seriously and they are involved in the decision making process within school.