

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Barnabas Warrington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Collin Street,
Warrington,
Cheshire
WA5 1TG

Diocese: Liverpool

Local authority: Warrington

Dates of inspection: 18th Sept 2007

Date of last inspection: 17th to 19th June 2002

School's unique reference number: 111299

Headteacher: Mrs P Johnson

Inspector's name and number: Sue Bowen 454

School context

St Barnabas is an average-sized primary school situated in central Warrington. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average, as is the number of pupils with special educational needs and statements. There are some pupils from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds, but the majority are white British and have English as their first language.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Barnabas Warrington as a Church of England school are good

All involved with St Barnabas are clear that it is a Church of England school and are proud to be part of this tradition. It replicates a loving family where children can flourish as individuals. The school is respected within its community for the quality of its provision and its clear Christian mission, which is reinforced by the high level of Christian commitment of the staff.

Established strengths

- The strong emphasis which the school places on Christian values and faith within a secure framework and all involved having a firm understanding of Christian traditions.
- The way the school has pro-actively liaised with the community it serves in order to ensure that all are comfortable with its Christian message.
- The happy, harmonious and respectful atmosphere which is accepted and upheld by all members of the school community.

Focus for development

- Establish a process for self-evaluating the school's distinctive character which involves all stakeholders.
- Define more clearly the way RE and Collective Worship are to be monitored within the new Focus Group structure

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

Pupils are very clear that they go to a Church of England school and know that it is different from some other schools nearby. They are proud of the school and feel that they are well cared for and kept safe from harm. They say there is no bullying in school and no-one feels sad or lonely. When pressed harder on this, they say that if anything does happen it is dealt with quickly. The school logo is clearly understood and pupils happily explain why the images of a cross and a bible tell them something important about the school. There is a real enthusiasm for RE lessons and the occasions when they visit the church as part of these lessons. Taking part in charity fund-raising makes pupils very aware of the needs of others and the Christian responsibility to those in need. There is a real sense of achievement and pride when members of the school council and eco-council describe their work. They know their thinking and deliberations are taken seriously and they are being supported well in

developing socially and morally when considering community issues. The school makes considerable effort to champion individual needs and concerns of the pupils and their parents. Pupils with special educational needs are diagnosed early and supported with care, skill and sensitivity. Many Muslim parents have deliberately chosen the school as they like the values it transmits and the spiritual nurturing which their children experience. Some Muslim pupils spoke confidently and proudly about their role in the school, including the services in Church and receiving a Bible at the leaver's service. The school's overt stance as a loving and welcoming family means that pupils from many different backgrounds are welcomed and their cultures are valued and celebrated. This excellent practice in the school is recognised by invitations for them to train others in the local authority on issues related to cultural diversity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship takes place daily: all staff attend and no pupils are withdrawn. Themes for the year are available and good detailed plans written for each term. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer well. They understand the purpose of saying grace before lunch and a prayer at the end of the day. This fully supports the school's emphasis on a prayerful life. Commendable awareness of the different religious traditions followed by pupils is shown during times of prayer. There is no expectation that all should follow the conventional stance of "hands together and eyes closed" and pupils are able to respond as they feel most comfortable depending on their family background. The termly Eucharist is of major importance to the school. Pupils follow the service with confidence, reading from the projected script and singing with enjoyment, encouraged by the skilful pianist. Several members of staff and some pupils take communion, reinforcing the centrality of this service in the Christian life. The impact of the acts of worship is reinforced by the vicar's active support and by a focused programme of visits to St Barnabas Church and to other places such as Liverpool Cathedral. These visits further assist the development of the pupils' understanding of Christian traditions and their personal spiritual growth.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and join in with enthusiasm and confidence, displaying good subject knowledge. Their books demonstrate a good range of coverage of different faiths, with Christianity having the main emphasis, in accordance with the Diocesan syllabus. Standards of work in RE are high throughout the school. Staff plan their lessons directly from the syllabus, enhancing it most effectively by incorporating active learning techniques. Pupils in year 1 working on how God created the world in a lesson taken out of doors were asked to close their eyes and feel the wind and the sun on their faces and remember that they had been made by God. Pupils in Year 4 re-enacted the story of David and Goliath. They then described the emotions felt by David when confronted by such enormous danger and his need for faith in these circumstances. Recent staff training and discussion has successfully focused on such methods of enlivening lessons and making them both powerful and relevant to pupils. One of the newly established Focus groups shares responsibility for RE and its members are establishing a schedule for monitoring standards in the subject.

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

The Headteacher has exercised strong and determined leadership to bring the school to its current settled and harmonious circumstances. She is ably assisted by her deputy and a talented staff with a high level of Christian commitment. Under the clear leadership of the Headteacher, staff have worked hard to ensure that all members of the school community assign themselves to the Christian mission of the school. The governors are proud of their school but are not yet clear about their role in self-evaluating the school's distinctive ethos as a church school. It is recognised that collective worship as well as RE need to be monitored and evaluated more closely, but clear structures need to be established to involve the foundation governors as well as other members of the school community in this exercise.