

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Stephen's Church Of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Woodgrove Road
Burnley
BB11 3EJ

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: 15/10/09

Date of last inspection: 27/03/07

School's unique reference number 119486

Headteacher: Mr I Wilson

Inspector's name and number: Mr G Yates

SIAS number 430

School context

The school is a smaller than average size Church of England Voluntary Aided primary school, situated in the outskirts of Burnley. An above average number of children are eligible for free school meals. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There are no children at an early stage of learning to speak English. The school has achieved awards including healthy eating and activemark awards

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Saint Stephen's primary school as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Saint Stephens' Church of England Primary School has a very strong Christian ethos. The environment is welcoming and very caring. Pupils achieve well in the core subjects, they feel very safe and are valued as individuals. The lack of progress in addressing successfully all the issues in the previous report has resulted in its distinctiveness as a church school is satisfactory rather than good.

Established strengths

- The strong leadership of the Headteacher, firmly based on Christian values
- The friendliness, politeness and caring nature of the pupils
- Parents' very strong support for the school

Focus for development

- Within the school's Christian ethos provide more opportunities for pupils to begin to develop their understanding of Islam and Judaism
- Ensure that assessment information in religious education is used effectively to show where pupils are in relation to progress against the Blackburn Diocesan Syllabus
- Involve foundation governors and other stakeholders in the evaluation of the school's Christian character, including worship and religious education

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

The school's Christian character encourages the spiritual, moral and social development of all pupils. However, while they have a good knowledge of their own cultures their knowledge of cultures different from their own is limited. Pupils respond well to everything the school has to offer and feel very much part of the community, benefitting from a good range of visitors, including the local police community officer, and also visits to other establishments. Pupils are keen to help each other and have a good sense of right and wrong. They are very polite and a pleasure to talk to. Pupils achieve good academic standards by the time they leave. Pupils say that, 'school is a good place to be,' and say that their teachers 'help them a great deal.' Standards of behaviour are good overall and pupils play very well together on the playground. Pupils feel that their views are taken seriously and that they are fully supported.

This is demonstrated by the value the school places on the school council. Members, for example, have played an active part in re-wording the school's mission statement. Members of the council say it makes them feel proud to be chosen by their friends. Pupils enjoy attending the weekly religious club [Jaffa club]. Links with the church are good and pupils benefit from regular contact with a member of the clergy. Parents and the broader community lend their support to the activities of the school very well. The school regularly takes part in charity fund raising, including helping the McMillan Cancer appeal. As a result pupils have a very good awareness of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves. The school entrance hall has an excellent harvest display and pupils talk with enthusiasm about the work that went into the school's recently held harvest festival.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The collective worship programme is well balanced to provide a distinctly Christian focus. There are weekly themes for worship but at times they are lacking in detail. Christian values promoted in worship are clearly evident when talking to pupils. Worship is led by the headteacher, by staff as well as by a local member of the clergy and by Christian groups. The school has taken some informal steps to develop its evaluative procedures to enable it to measure the impact of the provision on pupils but this is not firmly embedded in school practice. Pupils say they enjoy the school's collective worship. Pupils are able to say how the worship makes them 'think about what really matters'. They understand the purpose of prayer and the quality of their singing in the act of worship observed during the inspection was very good. This act of worship enabled pupils to gain a greater understanding of what prayer is all about. It was well led by the chairman of governors and included appropriate prayers. Care had been taken to generate an appropriate atmosphere for school worship within the hall through the provision of a cross as a focal point in the worship observed. The lack of modern information and communication technology in the school hall places limitations on the use of visual materials to support worship. There is some evidence that worship takes good account of Anglican traditions. For example, pupils experience the Eucharist being celebrated and older pupils question the vicar about Anglican artefacts. As such, pupils do have a developing knowledge of, for example, the symbolism of the bread and wine. Pupils say they enjoy the class led worship that takes place in school and enjoy celebrating church festivals in Saint Stephen's church.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Religious education is led by an enthusiastic subject leader and she is keen to help staff extend their subject expertise. Current practice means that some lessons are not taught by class teachers. The school does not have a complete portfolio of levelled assessed work to help ensure assessments are accurate, but a start has been made. Pupils are interested in religious education and talk openly about the subject. Older pupils talk confidently about what some of the parables Jesus told mean to them or what can be learned from the lives of famous people. A range of teaching methods is planned, including drama and storytelling techniques. During the inspection, exceptionally good teaching in one class ensured pupils were totally involved in the lesson and keen to answer questions. Work done previously in this class showed that pupils were challenged by the nature of the task to use their writing skills well in describing how they might have felt if they had been called by God in the way Abraham was called. Standards of attainment are satisfactory overall. Pupils have a good understanding for their age of Christianity but have a very limited understanding of the other designated world religions the syllabus asks schools to study. For example, some pupils did not know what a synagogue was used for. In the Year 6 class pupils are asked to record some of their ideas with regard to religious education. This is an example of very good practice. One child has recorded his own thoughts about the meaning of life, 'Life is a journey because when you are born you live, later on you die and you go to heaven for ever.'

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

The school has a strong Christian ethos. The headteacher with the support of the deputy headteacher has been highly successful in raising academic standards in the school. He is dedicated to ensuring the school's Christian ethos is at heart of all the school and leads by example. Parents are highly supportive of the school and appreciate the work being done by

the headteacher to make the school even better, for example windows have recently been replaced. Steps have yet to be taken to consult them about their views of the school as a church school and also the views of other stakeholders in an evaluation of the school as a church school. This was a key focus for development in the previous inspection report and has not been addressed. For example, foundation governors remain largely uninvolved in evaluating the success of the school as a church school. However they do support the school well and are proud of what it achieves. There is a good link with the church which includes regular entries by the school in the church magazine. The school does promote most aspects of community cohesion appropriately with sporting activities used well to enable pupils to socialise with pupils from other schools. The school has come a long way in a short period of time and is well placed to build on its successes to improve even further.

SIAS report; October 2009; St. Stephen's CE Primary School, Burnley BB11 3EJ