

Trinity Church of England/Methodist Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Kiln Lane
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 8PW

Diocese: Liverpool

Methodist District: Liverpool

Local authority: Lancashire
Date of inspection: 15th January, 2008
Dates of last inspection: 16th and 18th June, 2003
School's unique reference number: 119406
Headteacher: Mr Richard Kershaw
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Carol Berry; NS324

School context

Trinity Church of England/Methodist School is a larger than average school in Skelmersdale. It draws pupils from a variety of social backgrounds. 91% of pupils are white British. The headteacher has been in post for just over one year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Trinity School as a Church of England and Methodist school are outstanding

There is a Christian family atmosphere in this school which means that pupils enjoy their education and are able to achieve their potential. Community life is centred on worship and prayer is an important part of school life. Concern for each individual member of the community is evident in the leadership of the school and in relationships between pupils and teachers.

Established strengths

- Excellent relationships founded on Christian values.
- Outstanding Christian leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Committed staff who demonstrate Christian values in the way they lead their lives.
- Use of interactive prayer boards in all classrooms which have developed pupils' understanding of prayer.

Focus for development

- To promote respect for people of different cultures both through presentation of Christianity as a worldwide faith and through providing opportunities for pupils to meet with people of other faiths.
- To work in partnership with the local church in providing a different type of worship for parents and children.
- To formally collect and disseminate pupils' feedback on collective worship.

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

This school is centred on Christ and is characterised by relationships based on Christian values. Worship plays an important part in celebrating the values which pupils apply to their own lives. Pupils describe their teachers as "kind and fun". When conflict arises, teachers are prepared to invest a great deal of time in discussion in order to achieve understanding of the problem and reconciliation. Making children feel valued is a part of everyday life at this school. In one class, each pupil's learning objectives are printed on a card which includes a photograph of the pupil. Pupils' achievements are recognised during the "Trinity's Got

Talent” ceremony which takes place each week. They gain confidence from producing their own radio station which is broadcast using loud-speakers in the playground at lunchtime. Pupils love coming to school and one parent said that her daughter often asks to come to school at weekends, not just on school days. In this happy learning community, achievement is good and personal development is outstanding. RE makes a valuable contribution to the Christian ethos of the school, for example, visits are made to the local church where pupils share in a simulation of a baptism. Understanding of Methodism is developed through the inclusion of John Wesley in work on religious leaders. RE also makes a contribution to cultural development. In one outstanding RE lesson, pupils studied Jewish beliefs about the Torah through the festival of Simchat Torah. They particularly enjoyed this lesson because they were able to choose their own activity with the result that some used ICT, some wrote poetry, some did art work and others made traditional cookies. However, at present, there is no opportunity for pupils to meet people of other faiths or to visit their places of worship. There is an effective school council which provides opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills. They are active in raising money for a variety of charities, including the Macmillan fund and Operation Christmas Child. Pupils have a mature understanding of why Christians should care for others because clear links are made between charity appeals and Christian teachings. The school environment is vibrant, brimming over with displays which celebrate the value of individual pupils and which challenge them to think about Christianity, beliefs and the things they value. Many Bible verses appear in displays, linking important aspects of school life to Christian teaching.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils understand that worship and prayer are personal and relevant to all aspects of life. Their enthusiasm for worship is evident from the exuberance with which they participate. They say that they particularly enjoy the singing and opportunities for drama. They often write prayers and share in leading different parts of the service. Drama and dance by pupils are often features of worship. Excellent use is made of multi-media technology to provide an audio and visual stimulus. The combination of pictures and music is sometimes very powerful. On one occasion, pictures and music were used to welcome pupils into worship. Pupils gained understanding of the purpose of different parts of the service because these were clearly identified as the worship progressed. Pupils of all ages were engaged during the reading of a Bible story as pictures and the text of the story appeared while it was read. A worship plan, drawn up with support from the clergy, ensures that pupils encounter a broad range of Christian themes and that key festivals are celebrated. The plan includes the “verse of the week” which is included in every worship during the week, is read daily by a pupil over the loud-speaker system and appears with colourful visuals on a screen in the entrance. The choice of responses and prayers gives pupils understanding of worship in Anglican and Methodist churches. Once each week, someone from a local church makes a contribution to worship. This regular input by the churches enriches pupils’ worship experience and gives them a greater understanding of what it means to live the Christian faith. Parents say that their pupils discuss stories and ideas learnt in worship at home. One parent described a discussion about who was “boss” in their house, saying that her child had pointed out that it was really God who was the boss. At present there is no formal evaluation of worship, although conversations with pupils provide regular informal evaluation. The local churches are used for special services, for example, the junior nativity play provides a thoughtful reflection on the Christmas story incorporating drama, music and dance. Parents attend these special services and support occasions such as Education Sunday when pupils are invited to participate in Sunday worship at the churches.

The use of interactive prayer boards in all classrooms has made a significant impact on pupils’ ideas about prayer. Each class teacher has developed this idea in a different way, for example, using a prayer tree, prayers written on hands or developing a particular aspect of prayer such as thanksgiving or confession. As a result of these activities pupils see prayer as being relevant to their whole life. Parents comment on pupils’ use of prayer at home and some pupils said that they use the quiet area in the playground to pray if pupils are upset.

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

Effective Christian leadership is founded on concern for every individual member of the school family. The headteacher recognises the value of contributions made by other members of staff. Leaders put Christian principles into practice in the care they demonstrate for all members of the school community. As a result, an atmosphere of mutual respect has been created in which staff enjoy thinking creatively about their work. The governors regularly challenge the school about aspects of their Christian distinctiveness, demonstrating the concern for individuals which characterises leadership at this school. A recent challenge involved re-consideration of some regular school events which the governors felt might have a detrimental effect on the family life of staff. The Christian vision for the school is shared through the mission statement and through policies which clearly explain the Christian principles on which they are based. Self-evaluation is an important aspect of this school's life and effective self-evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness is carried out by a working group. The views of all members of the school community are valued and this group includes representatives of non-teaching staff and governors as well as teachers. Pupils' views are collected informally and have provided material to be discussed by this group. Although the school values the views of parents, they are not at present included in this evaluation process. The governors are very supportive of the school. There is an exceptionally strong partnership between the local Anglican priest and Methodist minister who effectively act as joint chairmen of the governing body at all times, although for administrative purposes they alternate the responsibility annually. This partnership has greatly enriched school life and is resulting in an innovative approach to developing relationships between home, school and church. A number of other members of the local churches make a contribution to the school, both by leading worship and by giving time to offer support in classes.

SIAS report January 2008 Trinity Church of England/Methodist School Kiln Lane,
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