

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bolton-le-Sands Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mount Pleasant Lane
Carnforth
Lancashire
LA5 8DT

Diocese:	Blackburn
Local authority:	Lancashire
Dates of inspection:	25 th April 2013
Date of last inspection:	13 th March 2008
School's unique reference number:	119521
Headteacher:	Mr Tim Cross
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs Ruth Wall (548)

School context

Bolton-le-Sands Primary School is a village school with 296 children on roll. Most children come from the village but some travel from local towns and villages. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage. The number of children on the Special Educational Needs register is below the national average. The number of children eligible for free school meals has risen significantly over the last four years but is below the national average. A new chair of governors was appointed in 2012 and, following a period of interregnum in 2011, a new vicar was appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bolton-le-Sands as a Church of England school are outstanding

This is a very friendly and happy school with a caring Christian ethos in which all members of the school community are highly valued and nurtured as individuals. There is strong and committed leadership by the headteacher, supported by the staff, governors and parents. The emphasis on Christian values enables all children to reach their full potential in both personal and academic development.

Established strengths

- The visionary leadership of the headteacher supported by the whole school community
- The way in which the school operates as a highly effective Christian community
- Children's broad learning experiences which contribute very effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Focus for development

- Provide a formal means for parents to express their views relating to church school issues

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

The wording for the school's mission statement: 'With God at the centre, we reach out to support each other in learning, growth and community' is a result of the whole school community's involvement in a review of the mission and aims. Staff, parents, children and governors confirmed that this statement is understood and lived out in all areas of school life. There are excellent relationships throughout the school community. A new member of staff spoke of what it meant to her to be working in a church school, 'It's had a big impact on me, you can feel the difference.' Children are polite, friendly and very well behaved. Another teacher explained that children are taught how to act and respond to others through reference to Christian values. Children's spiritual development is very good and is promoted effectively by religious education that is challenging and acts of worship that are inspiring.

Children are self confident because they benefit from the opportunities for taking responsibility. They are encouraged to follow the example of Jesus in demonstrating concern for world issues and they recognise the need to work together to help others less fortunate than themselves. Parents speak highly of the school's ethos and believe the Christian distinctiveness adds to this strength. Christian symbols and high quality displays throughout the school reflect the fact that Christian values are important here. Over the past four years children have consistently achieved high standards compared with schools nationally. A team of teachers is involved in analysing assessment data and they believe that early intervention is what makes the school successful in nurturing children and ensuring that strategies are put in place to support children in meeting challenging targets. High level pastoral care has clearly had a significant impact on the school community who have united together during sad and challenging times recently and over the years.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a central feature of school life which is respected and enjoyed by all staff and children. A child said, 'I like it when we pass the peace. We are part of a big family'. On-going evaluation of worship involves all members of the school community and informs planning and delivery. Children said they particularly enjoy having visitors to lead worship and the coordinator plans visits from a wide variety of people from different Christian traditions. There is a carefully planned programme of worship which the coordinator explained is, 'characterised by variety, relevance and engagement.' Themes are rooted in Christian beliefs and values. Worship areas in each classroom clearly help children to reflect on and respond to the current theme during the school day. The vicar of Holy Trinity is involved in planning and leads worship each week. In the worship observed, she skilfully explained the relevance for today's Christian life of Jesus' putting his trust in his disciple, Peter. It was a spiritually uplifting experience with children responding to opportunities for discussion and reflection and singing with obvious enthusiasm. Children's contribution of their own prayers is a regular and valued feature of worship; examples of children's prayers are seen around the school. Elements of Anglican liturgy are incorporated into worship, which helps to develop children's understanding of Anglican practice which they experience in the church services. Children spoke with enthusiasm about their regular involvement in planning and leading significant acts of worship in school and church. A child commented, 'It gives us a chance to make it our own.'

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) has the status of a core subject and supports the Christian ethos of the school. The curriculum is rich and varied, enabling the children to acquire knowledge and understanding through a range of learning opportunities. The subject leader has worked with a clear purpose and sense of direction in driving through initiatives to raise standards of attainment. She has benefited from diocesan training and provides informed and valued support to other teachers. Focused activities to improve awareness of diversity and promote positive attitudes towards race equality have resulted in the school being awarded the Race Equality Mark. One child said, 'It's important work – it helps to stop racism.' Highly effective use of assessment procedures are in place informing teaching and learning. Evidence of children's levelled work demonstrates the attainment and progress of the children with a significant number attaining higher than the national average. A wide variety of teaching and learning strategies is used in RE to take account of the different learning styles of the children. In the Key Stage 1 lesson observed the teacher demonstrated an outstanding level of skill in creating an environment which inspired and stimulated creative thinking. The Bible story of the disciples catching fish was acted out by children in a boat, complete with a fishing-net, as the teacher told the story. The class showed their considerable knowledge and understanding in their responses to open-ended questions. Tasks set were carefully matched to children's abilities so that each child was motivated and challenged appropriately. Children respond to asking and reflecting on 'big questions' such as, 'Where is God?' This is a key feature of RE provision and has led to children developing higher level skills to great effect in their understanding of the impact of religion on believers. Children showed that they understood that not all their questions could be answered by the teachers and the vicar, as one child explained, 'That's the reason for faith – we just have to trust God.'

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

The headteacher and governors are highly effective in articulating the Christian ethos and in promoting and establishing that ethos throughout the school and beyond to the community. The headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the development of the school as a church school and is active in encouraging, monitoring and challenging the school community to realise the vision. He is supported very well by the deputy headteacher, governors and all members of the school community. Governors provide challenge as well as support for the headteacher. Structures are embedded to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the school's performance based on rigorous self-evaluation. Diocesan training has helped the governors to clarify their role and affirm them. Effective strategies are in place for on-going school improvement, with a strong focus on meeting the needs of all the children. Parents, the church and the community contribute fully to school life. Of particular note was the involvement of a wide range of adults in the memorable Prayer Day and Bible Day. The school is committed to the professional development of the staff with examples of teaching assistants now training to be teachers and past teachers serving as headteachers in church schools. The leadership of worship and RE is given a high priority, and leads to highly effective practice. The established school council makes important and worthwhile contributions to the school. Children are confident that their suggestions are valued. Parents say that they are comfortable in expressing their views and there is evidence that concerns raised have been successfully acted on by the school. There is, however, no formal means of finding out the views of parents on specific church school issues. The school's own self-evaluation portrays an accurate picture of its strengths and shows a clear sense of direction for further improvement. They are right to be proud of their outstanding achievements.

SIAMS report April 2013, Bolton-le-Sands Primary school, Carnforth LA5 8DT