



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Balderstone St. Leonard's Church of England Primary School

Commons Lane,
Balderstone,
Blackburn,
Lancashire.
BB2 7LL.

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Date of inspection: Thursday 22nd May 2014

Date of last inspection: 7th May 2009

School's unique reference number: 119415

Headteacher: Mrs. Janet Banks

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. Anne B. Woodcock 445

School context

The school serves the villages of Balderstone, Osbaldeston and Mellor with some pupils travelling from the Beardwood area of Blackburn. The majority of the 91 pupils are of white British heritage, but a significant proportion are of Asian heritage, coming from India and Pakistan. The majority of children are from advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children in receipt of the pupil premium is low. The school benefits from a stable and experienced staff. The headteacher has been in post since September 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Balderstone St. Leonard's Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- Exceptionally strong, caring and nurturing relationships, based on Christian love and trust, support all members of the school family.
- The explicit Christian character of the school, exemplified through high quality displays of pupil work, which reflect the focus on embedded Christian values. This character creates the very positive, welcoming and supportive atmosphere felt by visitors.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The strong, mutually supportive links with the local church make a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school and to the spiritual development of pupils and other members of the school community.

Areas to improve

- Extend the opportunities provided for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate acts of collective worship.
- Develop the evaluation of collective worship to include all who deliver worship to inform future planning and lead to ongoing improvement.

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

Christian values are clearly expressed and understood by all who work in the school. All agree that the mission statement, together with the focus on Christian love as the core value, provide the key essence and purpose of the school. Children talk confidently about the logo 'Love of God, Love of Others and Love of Learning' because they were responsible for its development. They explain that, "Christian values help you to be more truthful, kind and compassionate." Pupils are confident and articulate. They are eager to learn and take pride in their achievements. They respect and trust their teachers saying, "They make learning fun and interesting, they're not too strict and always want to help you." Teaching is good. Pupils are well-supported, enabling all to make good progress. Standards of achievement and attainment are high and are consistently above nationally expected levels. Pupils strive to meet the high expectations set by teachers who inspire them with creative ideas and challenges. Pupils work together within a calm, purposeful working atmosphere which promotes concentration and allows for experimentation. Pupils behave extremely well. They care for each other and are eager to accept roles of responsibility. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They discuss the meaning of faith, different cultures and beliefs maturely. They have a sense of wonder and awe developed through their work and experiences in science, art and music, and they appreciate their role in caring for God's world. Pupils recognise that they are more fortunate than others and they enjoy planning events to raise funds for charities such as Children in Need and Christian Aid. Children are given time to reflect upon their learning and ideas. Increasing use is being made of classroom reflection areas as well as the extensive outdoor learning facilities, such as the willow dome and garden. Special events, such as the multi-faith week which included a multi-faith walk in Preston, make a positive and lasting contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Religious education also makes a very significant contribution to children's spiritual and personal development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Children enjoy and value collective worship. They have a very positive attitude to worship, saying that they particularly enjoy the singing and music. Pupils say that they feel included and that all forms of worship make them think about God and themselves. Collective worship is well-planned and delivered. It is 'proudly Christian' in context, being firmly rooted in gospel teaching. "We start to think about Christian values, what the Bible says and how Jesus wants us to live," explained one pupil. Pupils often revisit the worship theme in class discussions. They recognise that this gives them the opportunity to think more deeply about the message presented and to consider their personal responses. Children actively participate in worship. In the worship observed, all were able to talk about the optical illusions used to initiate discussions about the theme of truth. The worship group, made up of year six children, presented the story of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus through drama and readings, having decided on the format themselves. The oldest pupils also have some experience of planning and leading class-based worship and children are also involved in the delivery of worship in church. However, pupils do not yet have regular opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate worship, which the school recognises as being the next step in the continual improvement of collective worship. The strong links with the church make a very significant contribution to the nature of worship. The school now worships each month in church. Parents and members of the local community are invited to attend these services and do so in growing numbers. Special services, such as the one arranged by the school at harvest time, are much valued by parents and the community. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school, supporting learning and running the confirmation preparation lessons. There is close liaison between the school and children and young people groups from the church. Pupils have a developing understanding of traditional Anglican practice. They know and use formal prayers and graces. Prayer and reflection are a growing and regular feature of all forms of worship. Children write and use their own prayers which are kept in books and boxes around the

school. Worship is monitored by a governor and the pupil worship group is asked for their opinions. Although some worship events are evaluated effectively, a formal system of evaluation has not yet been established and this is an area for improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education (RE) is outstanding.

Pupils are extremely positive about RE. They enjoy their learning, which they say is always fun and interesting. "We learn lots of things from the Bible and some of the stories are really interesting to talk about," commented one pupil. Teaching is very good. It is extremely well-planned and delivered, using a range of approaches which challenge and inspire the children. In one of the lessons observed, the class used a 'conscience alley' to support their learning about Ruth and Naomi. Careful teacher explanation and questioning encouraged the children to think about the way in which Ruth made her decisions, before considering how they could use the same values. In another lesson, purposeful discussions about Zaccheus led the children to use powerful vocabulary to describe the change brought about by Jesus' forgiveness of his sins. The balance between learning about and learning from religion is outstanding. "RE is about how you feel about life, faith and belief," explained one pupil. Children have a good knowledge of the Bible and the life of Jesus and their knowledge of other major world faiths is excellent. They talk confidently and maturely about how other people worship God, recognising and valuing similarities and differences. They also recognise that Christians around the world worship in different ways. "It is motivating to find out how some people embrace Christianity, worshipping God in a different way." RE has a very high profile and it is extremely well-managed. Class RE scrapbooks, together with pupils' work books reflect the breadth and quality of work undertaken. Marking is purposeful and effective. It encourages pupils to reflect on their work and points the way to further improvement. The standards achieved in RE are excellent and all pupils make good, sometimes rapid, improvement. RE makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, both through discrete RE lessons and the way in which it is used in cross-curricular themes.

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

The distinctive Christian character and vision for the school is shared, agreed and upheld by all members of the school community. Although the headteacher is new to the school, she has quickly established an atmosphere in which all ideas are valued. Staff, pupils, governors and parents are fully aware of the school's core Christian values. They have personal ownership of the mission statement and school motto and are eager to ensure that it is 'lived every day' in school. Governors have a clear idea of their role. They support and challenge the work of the school, visiting regularly, monitoring RE and collective worship and ensuring that church school issues are prioritised in the school's improvement planning. In a recent review of the governing body committee system, changes have been made which reflect the importance of church and community within school planning. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The exceptionally strong links with the church and local community have a significant impact upon the Christian character of the school, exerting a positive influence on the lives of all members of the school family. Effective use is made of partnerships with the diocese and other local church schools. The pupil voice is strong. Children are confident that their opinions are valued and acted upon. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school. They are confident that their children are happy, nurtured and well-supported within a distinctly Christian environment which is fully inclusive. Parents explain, "Our children are respectful of beliefs and they learn to make the right choices." Regular parent forums and informal meetings ensure that parents feel that their opinions are sought and acted upon. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent.

