



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Darwen St Peter's Church of England voluntary aided Primary School

Turncroft Road

Darwen

Lancashire BB3 2BW

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Blackburn with Darwen

Date of inspection: 15 January 2015

Date of last inspection: October 2009

School's unique reference number: 119458

Headteacher: Victoria Weddle

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall (548)

School context

This is a larger than average-sized primary school with 267 pupils on roll. The school is situated in the town centre of Darwen. Pupils come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. There is a high level of mobility within the school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. Since the previous inspection, there have been some significant staff changes. The current headteacher took up post in February 2014, after leading the school since June 2013 in her role as deputy headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Darwen St Peter's as a Church of England school are good

- The commitment of leaders and governors to provide an inclusive education, based on Christian values, underpins the very good relationships between all members of the school community.
- The care, nurture and guidance of all children demonstrate the distinct Christian ethos of the school in action.
- The school provides broad and creative learning experiences which deepen children's spiritual understanding across the curriculum, especially in religious education (RE) and collective worship.

Areas to improve

- Involve the whole school family in a review of the mission statement and aims so that they reflect and celebrate the school's distinctively Christian ethos.
- Build on and embed good practice in the assessment of children's achievements in RE so as to ensure an accurate picture of their progress.
- Develop the governors' approach to self-evaluation and monitoring of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school in order to embed a more structured approach.

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

The school's chosen Christian values of love, trust, care, respect and joy are explicit in displays throughout the school, in children's work and in collective worship planning. These Christian values contribute well to children's very good behaviour and attitudes. As a result, learning and attendance are good. When speaking about the impact of Christian values on their lives children say that Jesus is their example to follow. 'Jesus was very brave in bad situations', is how one child expressed this. Parents approve of the school's teaching of Christian values, one saying that they have made 'a massive impact at home'. They appreciate that their children's efforts and achievements are acknowledged and celebrated each week with the whole school. The school's Christian character results in a secure and caring environment. This leads to good attainment and good and accelerating progress, as confirmed by Ofsted data. The school is highly effective in using data to track children's achievement and put in place intervention strategies to ensure they achieve challenging targets. There is a broad and rich curriculum which contributes significantly to the children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. A school focus on spirituality through art is having a positive impact on children's spiritual development. Verses from the Psalms are carefully selected to link with the Christian value depicted in children's art work. Children understand the need to help others less fortunate than themselves through their Christian service. One child said, 'It makes us value what we have too'. A group of children spoke with pride about raising money for a water pump for Africa and in adopting an ape which, they explained, 'is an endangered species'. The school demonstrates that it is both distinctive in its Christian character and inclusive in its approach to all children, regardless of differences and special needs. A teacher explained, 'Jesus went out of his way to embrace those with complex needs' and another teacher said, 'By seeing what we do we have seen children demonstrate extraordinarily caring attitudes to others'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Good quality worship planning includes Christian themes, with a strong emphasis on Christian values and important Christian festivals. This enables children to have an understanding of the nature of worship, the Christian faith and Anglican traditions and practice. Children benefit from a varied experience of worship led by a range of people. A Year 6 girl said that the vicar and curate 'make it fun with good props and involving us in acting stories out.' A Christian value is introduced as the theme of the week. 'What-if...?' questions that link with the value are decided upon by the children. 'What if there was no music?' is one question that led to activities and discussion in whole-school worship. Teachers speak with enthusiasm about their own class worship times which give them the opportunity to explore the week's theme in more depth and at the right level for their children's ages. The views of children and adults are considered as part of the on-going evaluation process. Children say they are pleased that they are now involved in choosing songs for worship. They clearly love singing and this serves to enhance the worship experience. Children know Anglican prayers, including the Lord's Prayer. They also respond to opportunities to prepare and express their own personal prayers. One child read her prayer in worship which expressed the joy of music and singing: 'God loves it when we worship him, this makes God joyful'. Collective Worship makes a significant impact on the lives of pupils. They are able to explain their developing understanding of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Junior children are involved regularly in planning and leading collective worship. As one Year 6 child put it, 'Our involvement makes it more interesting'. Parents and governors say they enjoy joining their children for special services. Of particular significance was the Remembrance service which involved the British Legion. Children wrote invitations which they delivered to the community. Feedback included: 'As a serving soldier I thought it was great', and, 'excellent worship, very moving...I learnt a lot today'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children make good progress as is evidenced in portfolios, in their written work and in their oral responses. The subject leader monitors RE thoroughly using observations, book scrutiny and cross-checking of standards. This monitoring ensures that all children are experiencing creative and challenging RE and that there is a good balance between learning about and learning from religion. Although new to the post as subject leader she has benefitted from diocesan training and provides informed and valued support to colleagues. A system for assessing children's achievements is developing well in tracking progress and determining next steps in learning. Children are encouraged to be reflective and are engaged in evaluating the quality of their work. Leaders acknowledge the need for teachers to moderate children's work together to give them a clearer understanding of all the attainment levels. Children have a very good knowledge of the Bible and the life of Jesus. The study of other faiths and a global outlook are embedded in the school curriculum. The school believes this gives children a deeper understanding of their own and other cultures and prepares them for life in our diverse global society. Children understand and make links between the beliefs and practices of other faiths. Visits to places of worship and input from adults and children of other faiths in the school community enhance this study. Children understand that Christianity is a global world faith. RE makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual development. This includes the whole-school 'Messy Harvest' day. A variety of specially designed activities helped children in their understanding of Harvest for Christians and people of other faiths. The bi-annual 'Living Church' day is also very successful in helping Year 3 and 4 children in their understanding of how St Peter's Church works. Governors are actively supportive and kept informed, but are not yet fully involved in a formal process of monitoring and evaluation of the subject.

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors promote Christian values as rooted in their faith. With the support of the staff they work hard to ensure that these distinctive values permeate all areas of school life. Governors are supportive of the school's Christian foundation. A commitment to the Christian faith has helped leaders and governors face recent challenging issues prayerfully and positively. However, the published mission statement does not reflect the school's distinctive Christian ethos. Governors are effective in their role as 'critical friends' to the leadership team and in supporting teachers as link governors to classes. Their communication with children is excellent, including letters exchanged between them at the beginning and end of each year. Self-evaluation and school improvement planning are on-going and effective. However, this is often done in an informal way rather than by using structured procedures. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of the school's Christian character in creating an ethos which supports effective learning. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. RE and collective worship are both well led with planning and evaluation key to future development. The professional development of the staff is a high priority with diocesan training specifically linked to church school development. The school works hard to involve parents and seeks their views. The majority of parents are very appreciative of the improvements being made. There is a very strong link with St Peter's Church. 'Messy Church' events are particularly successful in involving the school and church communities. The vicar says that the involvement of Year 5 and 6 pupils in the weekly Eucharist has 'broken down age barriers and been a really exciting development'. The well-being of all members of the school community is a high priority. The chair of governors said, 'We have a lot to thank God for, he is always with us'.

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