



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bollington St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Grimshaw Lane
Bollington
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK10 5LY

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Cheshire East
Date of inspection: 10 May 2013
Date of last inspection: 23 September 2008
School's unique reference number: 111324
Headteacher: Dr A Hodgkinson
Inspector's name and number: Mr Ian Newton 273

School context

Bollington St John's is a small three class school which is in a federation with Pott Shrigley CE Primary School. Both of these voluntary aided schools share a head teacher and the governing body is responsible for both. St John's has 63 pupils on roll, of which about 10% are eligible for free school meals. The number of children with special educational needs and disabilities is average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bollington St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided School as a Church of England school are outstanding

This is a school where Gospel values permeate all aspects of school life and which provide a code by which children can live their lives. They are manifested through the respect, care and consideration that are given to all members of the school community. Opportunities for spiritual growth and the building of confidence and self esteem are a natural part of children's educational experience.

Established strengths

- Christian values which are accepted and understood by all and which are the bedrock of the life of the school.
- The vision of the head teacher and commitment of all staff and governors to develop the potential of all pupils.
- The leadership and management of Religious Education which has impacted positively on the quality of teaching and learning.

Focus for development

- Strengthen links with the St Oswald's Church, Bollington.
- Ensure the school's Christian foundation is made explicit in all areas of the school.

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

The school is characterised by strong Christian values which underpin all that it does. The family atmosphere that pervades this school was spoken of in very appreciative terms by children, parents and governors. It is a very inclusive school, going to great lengths to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, whilst at the same time striving for all children to fulfil their potential. Parents strongly support the emphasis on Christian values such as caring and having respect for one another; understanding each other; and the promotion of good moral standards, encouraging children to treat others as they would wish to be treated. Behaviour is excellent and relationships between all members of the school community are outstanding. The close relationship with families ensures that attendance is good and a well developed transition programme has been devised with the local high school. Some exclusions have taken place in recent years, but the school strives to resolve difficulties through an approach tempered with understanding and forgiveness. Children's progress is closely monitored, however, because of the small size of pupil cohorts, generalised scores for the school can be misleading. Generally children make good progress and do credit to themselves in national tests. The school stands by its principles of keeping the child's welfare at the heart of things and takes decisions bearing in mind what it considers is appropriate for the child. Children are aware of other cultures and religions and the difficulties some people in other parts of the world experience. The International Primary Curriculum is used as a key resource which aims to give children a wider perspective on the world. A child living in Brazil is sponsored by the school and there is a link with a Ugandan school and one in London. In addition older children practise their foreign language skills through written exchanges with counterparts living in France. The strong Christian values found in this school touch all aspects of children's lives. They impact on, for example, their views regarding the imprisonment and treatment of Nelson Mandela, issues to do with the environment and the wonder of the natural world. Children are fully involved in reviewing and developing the school's Christian foundation. An ethos group made up of children from both schools of the federation meets regularly to look at the school's ethos, worship and church links. It is their forum, their voice. Each half term there is a focus on a specific Christian value which is reinforced in lessons and in whole school activities. Whilst some areas reflect its Christian foundation, this is not consistent around the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and is part of the rhythm of the school day. It is key to contributing to and supporting the school's Christian distinctiveness and promoting the values to which it adheres. In addition to the daily act of collective worship, children say prayers at lunchtime and at the end of the school day. Children and adults get the opportunity to think and reflect and time to build a relationship with and communicate to God. Daily collective worship is co-ordinated by a member of the teaching staff who is also responsible for religious education. She has established an ethos group of pupils who make suggestions about collective worship and contribute to informal evaluations. The collective worship policy is a succinct document, but lacks how worship is planned, recorded and evaluated. It would also be helpful to new staff, governors and the wider community to have some information in the policy document about how worship is organised during a typical school week. Children are familiar with aspects of the Anglican tradition e.g. colours reflecting the liturgical year, the use of artefacts such as candles and crosses and the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. The act of worship observed was based on "What matters most in life?" and opened with a recording of the song "My favourite things." The key messages were the summary of the law from St Matthew's Gospel in which we are extolled to love God and love one another, and the value we should put on people over material things. Children were eager to answer questions and contribute their views. However, some struggled to maintain their concentration. Children had to rely on memory for the words of the hymn, making singing somewhat hesitant, and this detracted from the overall experience. Children are familiar with writing and using their own prayers as well as those from the Anglican tradition such as the Lord's Prayer. Children's attention focussed on the projector screen, making the small candle at the front of the hall somewhat redundant as a focal point. Children do like the

worship that is provided and spoke positively about the range of people who lead it and the stories they were told. They like the variety that visitors bring to their experience. They were also enthusiastic about visits to the church, especially the experience weeks that the incumbent led and organised. Parents spoke of their desire to see greater involvement of the parish church with the school and this was also evident from children's written responses in questionnaires. The school sees that a further development of collective worship would be the opportunity for children to experience the Eucharist being celebrated. An issue from the previous inspection relating to evaluating the impact of collective worship has been fully met.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Much development work has taken place over recent months which has raised the quality of leadership in Religious Education (RE) and impacted positively on teaching and learning. The subject leader has participated in professional development through the Christian Leadership course, which focuses on the church school setting. There has been a shift towards enquiry based learning and Philosophy for Children (P4C) is well established and is being very effectively used to support teaching and learning in RE. A complete overhaul of the scheme of work and policy has been undertaken and, from working closely with Diocesan advisers, the Chester Diocesan Guidelines now make a positive contribution to the school's work. RE has a high profile in this school and consequently supports and contributes to the school's Christian ethos in a very positive way. RE is managed very well with the subject leader being responsible for the subject across the federation of schools. Planning at all levels is of good quality and through regular monitoring of teaching and learning and scrutinising children's work the senior leadership team and governing body know what is happening in this key area of school life. Monitoring has led the school to raise the profile of questioning. Moderation of pupils' work ensures that standards in RE are as good as those in other core areas of learning. In this school RE provides time for children to reflect and gives opportunities for personal growth and personal space. Time is given so that children have opportunities to ask questions and open forums are encouraged so that children can share their experiences. The lesson observed was a class consisting of children in Years 4, 5 and 6 with P4C techniques being used. The lesson started with a short video presentation about the story of Daniel in the lions' den, but led to a discussion about why some people abuse power. Children needed to work co-operatively in various group sizes and did so admirably. Relationships amongst the class members were excellent. Children were empathetic to and showed great consideration for those amongst them with learning difficulties. The depth of thought that was displayed was awe inspiring given the age of the children leading them to ask questions such as "Why do some people want power?", "Why was Daniel not afraid of death?", "Why does jealousy affect our actions?" and "What does it take to be powerful?" Children spoke with confidence and openness with some very sophisticated thoughts and arguments being put forward. Whilst all this was going on ICT was very effectively being utilised with some children using I-Pads to make notes which were subsequently shared with the wider school community on the school website. Children were very open with their responses. There was a relaxed approach but the focus was always maintained. The issue from the previous inspection relating to developing the quality of subject leadership in RE by ensuring the consistency of systems for monitoring standards and achievement, marking and assessment has been fully met.

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

The head teacher leads the staff and governing body in promoting the strong Christian vision of the school. The senior leadership team and governing body want the children to be the best that they can and provide innovative ways of achieving that aim whilst at the same time promoting Christian values. For example, through its excellent community links an "Academy" system has been established whereby children can choose an activity that they would like to try their hand at, be it a craft, a specific skill or going to a particular workplace. This and similar schemes have helped children find new talents that they have derived great satisfaction from and which has contributed to improvements in self-esteem and confidence for some. Governors know the school well and are fully conversant with its strengths and areas for development. All of the denominational aspects of the school are overseen by a

governors' committee for SIAMS (the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). The existence of this committee demonstrates the importance that the governing body places on the development of the school as a Church of England School. It is strengthened with the subject leader for RE and Collective Worship being a member of this committee. A major part of their remit is to evaluate relevant aspects of the Development Plan and scrutinise progress against targets. The school fully complies with the requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship and denominational RE. The school has good links with a range of organisations. Parents are very supportive of what the school is trying to achieve for their children and the values it is promoting. They organise fund raising and social activities and the school provides a parents' forum where ideas and concerns can be shared. Parents spoke very positively about the ways that the school developed to keep parents informed of what is going on. There are good relations with the Diocesan Board of Education which has provided training and support for governors and staff, and children have also taken part in activities that it has organised. Strong links exist with other local schools with which joint training has been organised. The leadership model that has been developed since the establishment of the federation encourages all staff to take on appropriate levels of responsibility. The expertise that has been developed has led to the school taking leading roles in locally organised leadership development training and courses organised by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

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