

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Bridgemere Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Bridgemere Lane  
Bridgemere  
Nantwich  
CW5 7PX

#### **Diocese: Chester**

Local authority: Cheshire East  
Dates of inspection: 23.04.12  
Date of last inspection: 18.05.09  
School's unique reference number: 111343  
Headteacher: Jane Dickinson  
Inspector's name and number: Ruth Wall 584

#### **School context**

This small school serves a rural area drawing children from the surrounding villages and the outskirts of the nearby town of Nantwich. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is well below average. Although the number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, the school includes an above average proportion of children who have statements of special educational need. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in staffing.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bridgemere CE Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory**

This school has an established identity as a church school which is supported by members of the community. The strong and supportive links with the church help nourish the children's knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. The children are valued and enabled to grow in confidence and maturity.

#### **Established strengths**

- The clear vision and commitment of the headteacher and governors to the continuing development of the Christian ethos of the school
- The strong link and feeling of mutual respect between the school and the church

#### **Focus for development**

- Increase the level of formal involvement of governors in the self-evaluation of the school as a church school, including Religious Education (RE) and collective worship
- Make provision for continuing professional development for those with responsibility for teaching RE in order to:
  - Ensure high standards of teaching and learning across the Key Stages
  - Embed systems for effective assessment and tracking of children's performance

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

Several staff spoke about the value they place on the Christian ethos of the school. One new teacher is very impressed and commented, *"It really does make a difference in this school."* A governor said, *"Christianity as a way of life here...is quite profound."* Parents value the contribution that the Christian character has on their children's development. A parent commented, *"We chose this school because it is a church school... where children are encouraged to actively worship."* Parents appreciate the quality of care for children and the way the children are helped to care for each other. They value the approachability of staff and the quality of information they receive from school. Christian signs and symbols are in evidence around the school. The school recognises the value of quiet reflection and each class has an area set aside for this. In one class this has been sited by the window where

children have responded to the teacher's encouragement to look outside and appreciate God's creation. Their own thoughts and prayers are displayed on post-it notes on the window. To ensure due prominence is given to displays supporting spiritual development and RE, an issue raised at the last inspection, each class now presents high quality displays which are monitored and evaluated by a governor. The school council is rightly proud of their role. Children spoke with enthusiasm about their identification of the need for different groups within the council to deal with separate issues including: healthy eating, charity and behaviour and how this is making a difference to the life of the school. One child felt she was playing an important role as a 'buddy guard' in helping other children at playtime. Worship, RE and circle time ensure good quality reflection and discussion. This enables children to become thoughtful about life and considerate to others. People in need in the school community have been identified by children and the school has responded to these needs with active support. The relationship with the school in Morongo, Uganda, is having a positive impact in helping children to not only care for others but to learn about the lives of children in a different culture and circumstances. Prayer is seen as important throughout the school day and children spoke naturally about the value of personal prayer. The local church, St John's, is a considerable distance away from school but staff and children enjoy going there to celebrate the main Christian festivals and so experience aspects of Anglican traditions. The vicar commented, "*God really matters in this school.*"

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Planned themes for collective worship are chosen from Christian values. The children learn how these values relate to their own lives, as well as hearing stories from the Bible to illustrate the themes. A system has been set up to enable stakeholders to comment on collective worship which has had some impact on planning. The governors have not been involved in more formal monitoring of standards of collective worship. Christian teaching goes beyond the time of collective worship. A recent newsletter offered the headteacher's challenge to 'Thank someone for their kindness', and, 'Go for a walk with an adult and pray for what you see.' Feedback from children showed that they had responded to these challenges in a positive way. The older children frequently take an active part in planning and leading significant acts of worship. They had responded particularly well to presenting worship on their recent in-depth class study, 'Our ever changing planet', with particular reference to the need to care for God's creation. The vicar leads collective worship on a regular basis which further promotes the Christian foundation of the school. In the worship observed, she engaged the children whilst putting across an important Christian message. Children understand the significance of lighting the candle at the beginning of worship and are always reminded that God is still with them when the candle is blown out at the end. A Christian song was sung with enthusiasm by most children. The school values the input from the minister of the Methodist church in leading worship and from a member of a local Methodist congregation, who tells '*amazing stories about missionaries*'. Input from parents and people from the community is also encouraged and valued.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

The school follows the diocesan syllabus. Religious education (RE) respects the school's Christian foundation as well as giving due weight to other faiths. There are some good cross curricular links which enable children to see the relevance of RE to other aspects of life. Class RE display work is very well presented. In the lesson observed in Key Stage 1, the teacher had thoughtfully taken into account questions raised by children following their visit to St Mary's Church relating to the use of kneelers in church. Questioning and thinking time was used effectively to guide children in learning from their study of prayer. The different group tasks were appropriate to the children's abilities and children were focused well on their activities. Although planning of the school's RE lessons is generally thorough, with a range of teaching and learning approaches, opportunities for assessing children's progress, both about and from religion are not yet embedded. Marking of written work, whilst being affirming of children's efforts, does not give targets for development or provide children with a clear focus of what they need to do next to improve. Portfolios of work and photographs of RE activities have been compiled but these do not give examples of children's measured achievements. The school recognises these are areas for development to ensure that standards of attainment demonstrate effectively the importance of RE as a core subject. Some children are positive in their attitudes towards religious education. The governor with

responsibility for RE has teaching experience and a good knowledge of the subject. She is now focused on becoming more fully involved in the process of monitoring and evaluation of RE.

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

The headteacher has a strong personal faith and a vision for the school based on clear Christian principles and values. She sets a good example in terms of her Christian witness and this is widely recognised as having a positive impact on the school's ethos. Governors are involved in the life of the school and are supportive of the headteacher and the Christian foundation of the school. They recognise that they now need to develop a more active role in the leadership and management of the school, as a church school. They see this as a key area for development in order that they can contribute fully to the school's self evaluation and inform development planning. Parents are enthusiastic about all that the school does for their children. They are keen to support its activities, including church services and fundraising. The school seeks the views of children in a range of ways including questionnaires, circle time and discussions within school council meetings. Children value their role in decision making and are very confident in expressing their views. Addressing the issue raised at the last inspection, the school now seeks the views of parents relating to church school issues, in an annual questionnaire. Parents know that their views are important to the school and that issues they identify are "*acted on quickly and fairly.*" The supportive partnership between the school and church continues to be a key feature and is mutually beneficial.

SIAS report April 2012 Bridgemere CE Primary School, Nantwich CW5 7PX