

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Blackpool St Nicholas' Church of England (aided) Primary

School Road
Marton Moss
Blackpool
FY4 5DS

Diocese: Blackburn
Local authority: Blackpool
Dates of inspection: 23rd April 2008
Date of last inspection: 14th – 15th April
School's unique reference number: 119594
Headteacher: Mr Andrew Mellor
Inspector's name and number: Mr Mike Graham 286

School context

St Nicholas' CE Primary School is situated to the south of Blackpool in a semi-rural setting. Pupils are drawn from a wide area. There are 232 on roll, of whom 31 are on the Special Educational Needs register. No children have statements of special educational need. The school is very popular, and often over-subscribed. A new build and upgrade is underway, and this will transform the facilities, which are cramped and restrictive. The new school building will have capacity for 420 children. Although the church is 1.5 miles away, links are very strong.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blackpool St Nicholas' as a Church of England school are outstanding

St Nicholas' is an outstanding Church of England School with a very distinctive Christian ethos. There is a recently established and inspiring leadership team, enjoying excellent support from the governing body and all members of staff. The vicar and PCC members of St Christopher's church (the joint benefice of St Nicholas and St Christopher's) are closely involved in the realisation of the school's Christian witness, which is very effective.

Established strengths

- The quality of relationships within the family of the school, which promotes a caring and welcoming ethos to all
- The excellent worship which makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual development of the children
- The clear Christian vision and strong leadership of the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team, well supported by staff, governors and church members

Focus for development

- Establish a portfolio of work and introduce a structured assessment system for RE

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

The children are happy, polite and friendly and know that they are valued and special. The school's Christian ethos has a strong impact on the children. The atmosphere around school

is calm and secure with many opportunities for individuals and groups of children to take on responsibilities. A good example of this is the effective way in which the Y6 'PALS' team provides activities and cares for the younger children. Every child is enabled to develop through excellent child-centred teaching and the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The Christian ethos of the school supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all the children very well. Openness, honesty and care for one another are outstanding. Relationships between staff and learners, amongst children and between staff clearly demonstrate Christian values. A school council member said; "When you're worried, there's always someone to talk to". The care shown to others is a really important aspect of school life for the children. Within school there are bright and often interactive displays, which demonstrate the importance of worship and religious education. The mission statement is prominently displayed and includes the significant phrase; "...a safe, secure environment underpinned by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ". There are effective areas of focus for worship in the hall. They include a candle, crosses, a sculpture of praying hands and carefully worded prompts (written and designed by the Y4 worship committee) to encourage the children's spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the life of the school. This is evident from the ease with which children discuss it. The planning is thorough, utilising the 'Wow' worship materials. It is evaluated on a regular basis by staff and by the recently formed Y4 worship team. All children and staff join in worship with enthusiasm. Prayer is used extensively and not just in the daily act of worship, and is a natural part of school life for the children. Parents commented positively about the fact that prayers are said frequently, including at lunchtimes. The children enjoy worship and value it highly. There were positive comments made including references to laughter, "acting out", singing, being involved and praying. The vicar was praised for using humour and for the child-friendly Eucharist, which is celebrated once a term. In the worship on inspection day all were fully involved. The positive interaction between the children and the headteacher was relaxed and yet reverent. There was a 'wow!' moment when some wonderful unaccompanied singing took place because a CD had been misplaced. The immediate public apology from the staff member concerned was a demonstration of the close and trusting relationships in school. There is a clear impact on the children's spiritual development. A boy commented that in worship "You can tell God what you've done wrong". They are eloquent and positive when talking about their beliefs. The vicar and the Headteacher work very closely together and links with the church in worship are strong. The major Festivals are celebrated in church, and parents and governors are supportive. Understanding of Anglican faith and practice is well taught, with the church as a resource and teaching by the vicar about the Eucharist with Y6 and celebration of a 'baptism' and a 'wedding' in KS1.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Standards in RE are good. There is an increasing emphasis on 'Attainment Target 2', the impact of faith on the believer, as well as good teaching of Attainment Target 1, the facts about religions. The children are encouraged and challenged to think, discuss and interact – often through drama – so that they reach a better understanding. Planning and evaluation are good, and excellent support and guidance is given to staff by the RE co-ordinator and the deputy head. The children are very positive about RE, speaking about the subject with enthusiasm. They have an understanding of the importance of studying faiths other than Christianity, one boy speaking with intense interest about his research into Hinduism. There

is, however, no portfolio of work or a structured system of assessment. The school acknowledges this. The RE supports the children's spiritual and moral development well. This is largely because of the openness and sincerity of the Christian teaching and the increased emphasis on helping the children to understand the effects of a living faith on a believer. The Headteacher sees RE as vital to the life of the school, and there is excellent support from staff and governors.

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

The Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and governors vigorously promote a distinctive Christian vision for the school. The headteacher's Christian conviction shines through all aspects of his leadership. All the staff feel valued and involved in putting this vision into practice. They helped to complete the school's Self Evaluation Form, in which the Christian foundation is frequently emphasised. An application for the new 'Church School Distinctiveness Award' is being made, which illustrates the significance of the vision as far as the leadership team is concerned. The vicar is fully involved and the governors and church council are fully supportive. The RE co-ordinator leads planning and development of the subject very well. Good use of long and short term plans for lessons and engagement with appropriate Diocesan in-service training are examples of this. The school council, worship committee and school captains provide structured forums within which the children take part in planning and evaluation. All are working effectively and the children involved know that their contributions are taken seriously and that their suggestions become part of school policy when appropriate. Examples given were the improvement scheme for lunchtime playground activities/equipment and the traffic survey prompting action by the local council. The vast majority of parents are delighted with the school, and all are given regular and varied opportunities for feedback. "You can always see the teachers if you need to." "They are very caring. It's a fantastic school".

SIAS report