

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Dodworth St John the Baptist Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Barnsley Road, Dodworth, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S75 3JS

Diocese: Wakefield

Local authority: Barnsley

Date of inspection: 20 October 2009

Date of last inspection: 25 June 2007 and 9 July 2007

School's unique reference number: 132753

Executive Headteacher: Mrs P. Hilling-Smith Associate Headteacher: Mr I. Goddard

Inspector's name and number: Mr Malcolm Price (627)

School context

Dodworth St John the Baptist CE Primary School is situated in a former mining village and close to the parish church. Almost all of the children come from long established interconnected families and the overwhelming majority of pupils are of white British origin. The school has the Eco Green Flag, Active Mark and Healthy Schools awards. The executive headteacher was in post at the time of the previous inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The Christian character is evident in all areas of school life and is lived out in practice and through relationships. Children are happy, confident and secure. Strong leadership and teamwork have created a learning environment which is successful and which is a pleasure to experience. This is a school which seeks to serve its community.

Established strengths

- An explicit Christian foundation, which is worked out in practice
- The Christian vision articulated by those in leadership
- The high priority given to children's spiritual development

Focus for development

- Continue to develop children's spiritual and cultural awareness in partnership with the community and as outlined in the school's 'mission tree'.

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

The distinctive Christian character of this school shines through in its daily life and clearly underpins relationships at all levels within the school community. The needs of all learners are met in the widest sense; children are motivated as individuals to know and be secure in their place in the school family. The values that are stated and displayed on the school's 'mission tree' are evident in children's positive behaviour towards each other, in their relationships with adults and in the maturity they demonstrate for their age. Children are aware that their school has a Christian character and appreciate its close links with the local church. They know how this impacts on their conduct; for example, they speak about 'forgiveness'. Parents are highly supportive of the school ethos and speak positively about the partnership between the school and the church. Members of the school community, in their own way, speak of the impact that Christian values are having on school life and on the wider community around them. Learners achieve well from a range of starting points and are enthusiastic about their work. Children speak readily about their enjoyment of lessons, which are purposeful, imaginative and enhanced by valuable educational visits. Attractive and relevant displays around the school reflect and promote the Christian character and prayer is an important theme – children use the 'please pray for' slips in the entrance hall.

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

The importance of worship in the life of the school is explicit in school documentation and the key part it plays in the school day is well established. Collective worship is distinctively

Christian - children know and use the Lord's Prayer and some simple responses; they sing well and the manner of their participation suggests that the words are having a positive impact on their understanding and attitudes. For instance, recently children adopted some words from a song to create a display based on their local history studies and entitled 'you are the future we hoped for'. Children take ownership of collective worship – one child explained that 'we light a candle to invite God to join us'; another commented that 'it's our collective worship, it's not just for the adults.' The atmosphere is calm and respectful and has a strong element of prayer. The content is relevant, inclusive and appropriate to the children; they are encouraged to participate and respond. Collective worship is well planned and the input of children is catered for at the planning stage. It is very well supported by staff and by visitors, including the vicar and a locally based church worker. Parents are regularly invited to attend and are appreciative of the welcome extended to them. The school has taken appropriate steps to evaluate the impact that collective worship is having on learners. This has been done sensitively so as not to detract from the special nature of the activity. Children's views have been fundamental in this process and their ideas have been taken on board. There are plans to develop a collective worship planning group in the future, which will include children. The importance of collective worship is strengthened by regular visits to the local church for the major Christian festivals and other events. The links between the school and church communities is firmly embedded.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

Religious education is given a strong lead and it is apparent that this subject area enjoys a high profile in the school. Lessons have good pace, imaginative content and strong cross curricular elements. As a result, children are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and keen to learn. Religious education is well planned in themes with a clear progression through the school. For instance, year 6 children were planning an ICT based presentation about Judaism to show to a year 3 class following similar areas of study. Activities in religious education also help children to understand those from other faiths and cultures – for example, children had enjoyed and learnt much through re-enacting a Passover meal. Children's awareness of people who are different to them has an impact on their relationships with each other; children in one class spoke confidently about what they had learnt from the 'Good Samaritan' story. The subject leader maintains a portfolio of work which clearly demonstrates the high standards achieved.

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

The school leaders have been effective in creating a church school environment in which everyone thrives. This has not been achieved by chance, but is the result of hard work and dedication. The executive headteacher, associate headteacher and chair of governors lead by example through their clear commitment to promoting the Christian ethos and purpose of the school. The sense of shared purpose is based on objectives that are clear and unequivocal. Governors have a long term commitment to maintaining and supporting the school's Christian character and have taken decisive steps to establish succession planning. The school council takes seriously its role in helping the school to run smoothly. Parents are complimentary of the school 'team'. The school leaders and local church family have been proactive in developing mutually beneficial links and a shared vision. The success of this partnership can be seen in rising church attendance and an increased range of joint events and services. These joint initiatives have given children a good understanding of community, as epitomised by the promotion of the local 'Whit Walks'. Community cohesion is well developed. This can be seen in the regular use of the school hall by the 'mums and toddlers' group and, in a wider sense, in the good range of contacts cultivated with a number of communities in developing countries, through which children are experiencing other cultures. The school leaders take a reflective and evaluative approach to this aspect of their work. The school can afford to be outward looking because it is confident in its own spiritual starting place.