

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Barrowford St Thomas Church of England Primary School

Wheatley Lane Road,
Barrowford,
Nelson,
Lancashire.
BB9 6QT

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire
Dates of inspection: 7th February 2008
Date of last inspection: 25th January 2005
School's unique reference number: 119431
Headteacher: Mrs T Heys
Inspector's name and number: Peter Jump 25

School context

Barrowford St Thomas is a small voluntary aided Church of England primary school situated in a semi-rural village location on the outskirts of Nelson. There are 120 pupils on roll in four mixed-age classes. There have been many changes since the previous inspection including building alterations to the relatively new school building. The head teacher has been in post for 18 months, the deputy for 6 months and there have been two recent teacher appointments made.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barrowford St Thomas as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The distinctive Christian character of the school permeates all aspects of school life. Its Christian values are promoted well and make a significant impact upon each child's development.

Established strengths

- The very strong links with St Thomas' Church;
- The clear commitment to supporting the Christian ethos of the school from the governors and staff;
- The clear Christian vision of the Head Teacher.

Focus for development

- To create stimulating displays of children's religious education work
- To provide a focal point for individual reflection and prayer in each classroom

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

Christian principles and values permeate the whole life of the school and this has a very positive impact on each child's personal development. Their social and moral development is outstanding due to the excellent relationships that exist within the school. The children feel safe and can turn to any adult in school should they encounter a problem. This outstanding Christian care is reflected in the children's confidence in each adult. They feel that they are listened to no matter how small the problem might be. In the children's own words, 'People care for each other', and 'Everybody works together and helps each other. We never feel left out.' The children respond very positively to the individual responsibility that is given to them. There are effective reward systems in school that encourage very good behaviour and which contribute extremely well to the children's moral development. Spiritual development is promoted very well. There are opportunities for prayer and reflection through collective worship, Religious Education, at lunchtime and the end of the day. Whilst there is a small cross in each classroom, there are no focal areas to provide further opportunities for personal reflection at other times. There are excellent links with the church through such initiatives as the 'Kids in Church' services after school. The cultural development of each child is excellent due to the many opportunities provided, especially through the Pendle network of small

schools and sports' partnership initiatives. These have enabled each child to learn about other cultures at first hand. Parents, quite rightly, speak highly of the school, 'This is a lovely, homely, well-run church school that has values and standards that are constantly being met.' All groups flourish, enjoy school and fulfil their potential.

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

Worship is seen as a vital element in the school and in its Christian witness. It is very well planned, monitored and evaluated by an enthusiastic worship co-ordinator who has a clear understanding of his role. Worship is varied and is led by the Head Teacher, Deputy, Vicar and other teachers. Children participate in worship and this has a very positive impact on their spiritual development. They thoroughly enjoy listening to different people and seeing their friends participate. A pocket money collection for Derian House Hospice is taken every Thursday when the Vicar leads worship.

The whole school act of worship seen on the day of the inspection was excellent. A small wooden cross and candle provided a focal point. A power point presentation was used as an aid and all the teachers were present. The children entered and left the hall very reverently. They listened attentively and were very responsive to the well directed questioning. There was time for reflection and thoughtful prayer. The singing was enthusiastic and the behaviour was excellent.

Worship is recognisably Christian and effectively develops the children's understanding of the Anglican tradition. The Vicar is fully involved in school life both pastorally and educationally. The high quality collective worship has a crucial impact on the social, moral and spiritual development of each child.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

The school recognises the important part that Religious Education plays in the development of the whole child. It is well planned and delivered. The subject leader has introduced assessments at the end of each unit of work and is monitoring the impact of this. The children have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. They know who Jesus is and why he came to die. Achievement in relation to the children's background and prior attainment is good and is in line with other foundation subjects. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of each child, however, the children's work in the subject is not celebrated through display on a regular basis. Schemes of work fully comply with the Blackburn Diocesan syllabus and reflect the school's Christian foundation at the same time as giving some weight to other faiths. The Vicar is fully involved in the life of the school and his expertise is used from time to time in the delivery of the curriculum.

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

The Head Teacher has a very clear Christian vision for the school, ably supported by the Deputy Head and Governing Body. Together they are very effective in developing and promoting the outstanding Christian ethos and character of the school. The leadership of religious education and collective worship is also very effective and much progress has been made in a short time. There is an excellent team spirit within the school which has a significant impact on each child helping them to fulfil their potential and feel that they are part of a caring and supportive Christian community. An active School Council gives pupils a voice in improving their school. The Governing Body excels at being supportive, yet critical, friends constantly seeking continuous improvement in all that is done. A recent teacher training course reviewing the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school was attended by many governors. The results of this can clearly be seen in the very effective leadership and management of the school. Governors are also pro-active in attending other training sessions in order to carry out their duties and develop their expertise. Children and their parents speak appreciatively about the commitment of the staff to all individuals, the quality of education provided and the mutual respect that exists.