

Baxenden St. John's Church of England Primary School

Church Avenue
Baxenden
Accrington
BB5 2RQ

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire
Dates of inspection: 30th March 2009
Date of last inspection: 29th June 2006
School's unique reference number: 119440
Headteacher: Kathryn Adnitt
Inspector's name and number: Neville Norcross NS403

School context

The school serves the parish of St. John's Baxenden. The children come from a mix of social and economic backgrounds. Most children are of white British origin. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties/disabilities is below average. Approximately one third of families have a regular connection with St. John's church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Baxenden St. John's as a Church of England school are satisfactory

St. John's has an established identity as a church school which is supported by all members of the community, who display a strong sense of teamwork. The Christian character of the school makes a significant impact on the personal development and well-being of the pupils. The children are well cared for and supported and are proud of their school.

Established strengths

- The quality of the relationships between all members of the school community
- The good behaviour and attitudes of the children.
- The children's positive views of daily worship together with the role of the Worship Group

Focus for development

- Involve all members of the school community in a review of the school's mission
- Develop the arrangements for evaluating the school's distinctiveness by including children, staff, governors and parents.
- In religious education, ensure that the good practice evident in some classes is spread consistently through school

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

The children feel valued and know that their views are taken seriously. They behave very well and say that any incidents are dealt with rapidly and fairly. The "going for green" scheme has been introduced recently and the children have responded very positively to this. There are good relationships between all members of the school community and the children know that they will be well cared for. Prayer is recognised as an important feature of school life and one child commented "Prayer helps me to feel safe throughout the day." The SEAL programme is used to address children's emotional and social needs. Each classroom has a "feelings box" in which children can express their concerns. There has been a good focus on the Every Child Matters agenda and, in particular, a good response to healthy living initiatives. Christian values are implicit in the way that the school cares for the children although they have yet to be made explicit in the life of the school. The children respond positively to those occasions when they are given times of reflection. They are given quiet times as part of daily worship

and thought-provoking activities in some RE lessons. This makes an important contribution to their spiritual development. However, there are few opportunities for informal prayer and reflection throughout the school. The children have a good sense of right and wrong although they do not readily link this morality with gospel values. There are only limited opportunities for children to learn about and experience the range of cultural differences within nearby communities. This has been recognised as an area for development and plans are in place to address it. The children's social development is good. Everyone within St. John's has a strong sense of belonging, both to the school, the church and the local community. The children support a good range of charities including the Bethany project which has led to visits from the "Bethany children". The staff have tried hard to overcome the limitations of the building by providing attractive displays. These have the greatest impact when they are interactive and challenge the children's thinking.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is regarded as being central to the Christian character of the school. The planning is thorough and covers a broad range of themes. Children express positive views about the daily act of worship. They recognise its importance in the life of a church school. One child said "We wouldn't be a church school without it." All members of the teaching staff attend worship and join in enthusiastically. This sends positive messages to the children about the importance which is attached to daily worship. The children enter the hall reverently and listen carefully to what is being said. They also enjoy those occasions when they are able to take an active part. The children's singing is excellent. They sing with enthusiasm and clarity. On the day of the inspection, "The Servant King" was sung with great commitment. Acts of worship contain opportunities for children to have a quiet time of reflection and this helps their spiritual development. A Worship Group with voluntary membership, has been established. This provides children with opportunities to plan and lead their own acts of worship. This is a good initiative and the members of the group have responded positively to the challenge to create acts of worship based around particular themes such as "mountain experiences". The children are able to develop an understanding of Anglican faith and practice through the use of traditional greetings at the start of worship. This is further enhanced by the use of liturgical colours and the use which is made of traditional songs and prayers.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Standards in religious education vary from good to below average. Some good teaching and learning takes place but this is not seen consistently across the school. Both lessons seen on the day of inspection were satisfactory although they had some good features. The children in these lessons responded enthusiastically to the work which was presented. The creative use of music and visuals engaged children's interest. They asked some thoughtful questions although these were not always followed through in a way which developed their thinking. In most classes, religious education is not taught by the class teacher. This can lead to RE being confined to the lesson itself and not developed throughout the curriculum. The children speak positively about RE and particularly enjoy those occasions when they are able to respond to challenging issues. The co-ordinator brings a good deal of commitment and enthusiasm to her role. She has worked hard to monitor the impact of the subject by scrutinising children's work and observing lessons. She has developed a comprehensive portfolio of children's work. This work has been assessed in order to give the co-ordinator an understanding of the standards which are being achieved. The results of these assessments have not yet been shared with other members of staff. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to provide a variety of learning activities for the children. There are some good examples of activities which challenge children's thinking about deep issue but this is not seen consistently across the school. Class scrapbooks are in the early stages of development and promise to provide alternative ways of recording children's work. The last inspection report asked the school to provide a better balance between the teaching of Christian and non-Christian faiths. It also asked the school to introduce a system of assessment in RE. The school has made good progress in both cases.

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

Leaders at all levels demonstrate a strong commitment to developing the Christian character of the school. The headteacher sets a good example in terms of her Christian witness and this has a positive impact on the school's ethos. However, the overall vision for the school as

a church school is not clear and this is limiting progress. There is a Mission Statement but it is acknowledged that this is in need of review as it currently has limited impact on the life of the school. School documentation such as the Prospectus make reference to the Christian character of the school but this does not come across strongly. The headteacher has carried out an evaluation of the school's distinctiveness, using the National Society Toolkit and this has been shared with staff. At present there are no clear links between this evaluation and the school's development planning process. The school governors work hard and are very supportive of the school although they have not yet been fully involved in strategic plans relating to the development of its Christian character. Parents speak positively about the school and appreciate the way in which its Christian character has a positive impact on their children's personal development and well-being. All members of the school community display a high level of commitment to St. John's as a church school. There are strong and productive links with St. John's church. Church members provide practical support for the school and welcome the children into church for major festivals and other occasions. Some impetus has been lost during the period in which the church has been without an incumbent.

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