

Bilsborrow John Cross Church of England Primary School

Garstang Road,
Bilsborrow,
Preston,
Lancashire,
PR 3 0RE.

Diocese: Blackburn

Local authority: Lancashire

Dates of inspection: Friday 5th June 2009

Date of last inspection: April 2006

School's unique reference number: 119519

Headteacher: Mrs. Sandie Lane-Dixon

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. Anne B. Woodcock (445)

School context

Bilsborrow John Cross Church of England Primary School serves the village of Bilsborrow. It is a very small school with 35 pupils on roll, the majority of which are white British. Attendance is good. The present Headteacher has been in post since January 2009. The school has experienced an extended period of staff instability but it is now in a position to develop and grow with a stable and committed team.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bilsborrow John Cross as a Church of England school are good.

Bilsborrow John Cross now has a clear Christian vision based upon gospel teaching. The leadership and example of the Headteacher, together with the very supportive Governing Body and committed staff, inspires pupils to achieve their personal potential.

Established strengths

- The strong Christian ethos which is evident in all aspects of school life.
- The effective links with the church and local community.
- The caring and nurturing relationships which support pupils and their families.

Focus for development

- Ensure that children's understanding of and respect for other faiths is planned and delivered consistently in RE.
- Introduce a consistent system of evaluation for daily acts of worship.

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

Pupils are happy, safe and valued. They enjoy their work in which they are well-supported and make good progress. They benefit from a range of well-planned cross-curricular theme days such as the African Day and the recent Walk to School Day which engage interest and encourage co-operative learning. All pupils talk with knowledge about life in other countries. They empathise with children who have less than themselves and seek to raise funds for them. Pupils are proud of their school. They are articulate and mature individuals who show Christian care and concern for their school, their village and the wider world. All are able to talk about their role in maintaining the environment and keeping themselves healthy. They explained eagerly how they worked together to achieve the Eco-school silver award and the Healthy School Standard. The youngest pupils showed how they take care of the tadpoles, explaining their needs as well as the life cycle they had studied. Pupils' self-esteem is high. This has been improved since Christmas with the development of the school council . Pupils

have high regard for their teachers and they are confident in their ability to resolve a problem if the Year 5 and 6 pals have been unable to do so. The Christian ethos permeates all relationships within the school family. Both staff and pupils talk of how they feel supported and encouraged to attain their goals. The school has made very good use of the outdoor areas. Children really value being able to sit quietly, reflecting upon God's world around them. They appreciate and care for the resources which have been donated by previous Year 6 pupils. "Last year's Year 6 made a cross. We didn't want it vandalised so we keep it here," explained one pupil. The recently acquired outdoor worship area has already had a positive effect. It was used to celebrate Pentecost, with all the children using ribbon banners to represent the Holy Spirit as they listened to the real wind blowing through the trees. The bright, informative displays celebrate pupil achievement and provide a stimulus for further learning.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about worship. They explain how they 'pray everyday and it feels joyful.' Daily acts of worship are led by the headteacher and the vicar with visiting speakers from the extended community. The atmosphere is reverent being created by music, the use of pictures and the lighting of a candle. Themes are well-planned and delivered in ways which attract and maintain pupils' attention. Balloons and bubbles were used to try to explain that the Holy Spirit can go everywhere to anybody. The pupils expressed their enjoyment through laughter but were able to become more reflective very easily. They are well-used to praying for others. All were able to say who they wished to pray for. During Lent this year, the school supported a school in Mombassa, Kenya by praying for them daily as well as raising funds for an improvement project. Prayer is an integral part of each pupil's day. They use formal prayers and they request to be allowed to lead prayers in daily worship. Both staff and pupils gain spiritually from the worship experiences. One member of staff explained that her personal faith had deepened through the weekly prayer group meetings which were instigated at the beginning of the year. There are very strong links with the church which is used to celebrate all Christian festivals. Children take an active part in planning and delivering these services which are well attended and received by parents and villagers. Pupils' understanding of the Anglican faith is developed through daily acts of worship and the celebration of festivals in church. Worship events are recorded weekly. Some evaluation of the impact takes place but this is not yet systematic.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Pupils speak very positively about RE lessons. "Teachers think of interesting ways to help you learn, not just writing all the time." The pupils recognise that their RE studies give them time to think and reflect upon what is important to them as individuals. They have a good knowledge of the Bible and of the major Christian festivals. Activities include hot-seating, drama and ICT. The older pupils created power-points telling the Easter story. Key Stage 1 and Foundation pupils made cakes and hats representing the flames of the Holy Spirit during their RE lesson so that they could understand and celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Efforts are made to link collective worship with RE wherever possible to reinforce the essential Christian message. The pupils gain spiritually and morally from their RE lesson experiences. "We like RE because we get time to think," remarked one pupil. Displays around the school reflect the work undertaken in RE. Key Stage 1 pupils created a display reflecting Jesus as a leader whilst the Key Stage 2 classroom showed consideration of Jesus as special and as a leader. Pupils are encouraged to consider how their learning impacts upon their own beliefs. "What Would Jesus Do?" posters are present in the Key Stage 2 classroom and hall. The RE co-ordinator has been appointed recently. She is well-supported by the headteacher and diocesan staff. The diocesan syllabus is used and a new 4 year rolling programme for Key Stage 2 and 2 year programme for Key Stage 1 has been agreed recently. Pupils complete self-evaluation sheets at least twice a year, using the year group 'I can' statements. They are honest and open about their abilities and standards achieved are at least equal to those attained in other subjects. A portfolio of assessed work has just been introduced. The subject is well-resourced although it is recognised that the resources do need some reorganising. Coverage of faiths other than Christianity would benefit from a more focused approach.

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

The headteacher's strong personal Christian faith has had an immediate impact upon the school's vision. Recognising that the school needed healing, the headteacher ensured that all stakeholders were included in an initial assessment of needs. The focus on the Christian vision, with Christ at the centre has been very well translated and is understood by all sections of the school family. The Governing Body is very supportive. Many governors visit the school regularly, working with children supporting learning and the extended curriculum. The staff prayer group, which meets at the beginning of each week, has drawn the team together very effectively. Staff feel valued and well-supported. All areas now have a Christian symbol, some of which have been designed and made by the children. Parents are supportive of the school. They know that their child is happy and well-supported and they appreciate the efforts made to improve behaviour. The focus on SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) has resulted in noticeable improvements in pupil behaviour and attitudes. The leadership of the headteacher has brought about changes in the way in which children are being supported and treated. Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation underpin what is being done. The above average number of pupils with additional needs are well-supported. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that their voice is heard. They described in detail how the school council was elected 'democratically' and that anyone can present their ideas through the ideas box. They seek to do well and have their skills and abilities recognised. Friday 'top table' and 'hot chocolate with the headteacher' are key features of their week. Planning and assessment systems in RE, a focus for development in the last inspection, have been embedded and monitoring and evaluation strategies for the subject have been put in place. Good use is made of local authority and diocesan support such as the Church School cluster group. "The school is at the heart of our village again," remarked one parent.

SIAS report June 2009 Bilborrow John Cross C E Primary School, Garstang Road, Bilborrow, Preston PR3 0RE.