

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Aidan's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Larch Grove  
Bamber Bridge  
Preston  
PR5 6GX

<b>Diocese:</b>	<b>Blackburn</b>
Local authority:	Lancashire
Dates of inspection:	22nd March 2010
Date of last inspection:	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2006
School's unique reference number:	119380
Headteacher:	Mrs Sandra Evans
Inspector's name and number:	Mr Mike Graham (286)

#### School context

St Aidan's is a smaller than average sized school. It serves a mixed semi-urban area and most children are local. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Stability and good progress have been established recently following several staff changes.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Aidan's as a Church of England school are good

St Aidan's has a distinctive Christian ethos. Christian values and attitudes underpin the foundation of school life and are foremost in the improvements over the past two years. The school sees itself and is viewed by others as a close-knit Christian family. Links with the church and the local community are close and mutually beneficial.

#### Established strengths

- The warm and open relationships within the family of the school
- The Christian vision and inspiring leadership of the Headteacher, supported well by all staff and governors
- The exemplary behaviour of the children

#### Focus for development

- Involve all stakeholders in the creation of a new mission statement
- Expand global community cohesion through links to other cultures and faiths
- Involve the children in a structured system for the evaluation of worship

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

The Christian ethos of the school has a significant impact on the children's personal development. The headteacher said with conviction 'the Christian ethos underpins (our) high expectations'. The children feel secure, valued and special. Their behaviour and care for one another are exemplary. Following a visit to County Hall the chair of Lancashire County Council wrote to the chair of governors and included a comment that 'The children were so alert, bright and well behaved'. The school council, play leaders

and monitors for various activities, including worship, all allow children to express themselves and develop leadership potential. The school council functions well, and it plays an important part in evaluation, decision-making and modelling good behaviour. The children involved know that their contributions are valued and that their suggestions become part of school policy when appropriate. Child-centred teaching, fund raising activities and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs in sport and the arts ensure that children develop social responsibility and various sporting and artistic skills. Global community cohesion is being developed through projects such as 'fair trade fortnight' but this is still an underdeveloped area of work. Openness, honesty and care for one another are prominent features of personal relationships. These attributes are recognised by the children and parents as being significant. 'The children give each other hugs at the gate'. Relationships between staff and children, amongst children and between staff demonstrate Christian values very effectively. One child said that the best thing about school is that 'the teachers make lessons fun'. The school environment is used very well to encourage spiritual development. Bright and interactive displays, many of which have RE and worship as their theme, transform the experiences of the whole school community and any visitors. Children respond eagerly to the prayer corners in each classroom. A peaceful atmosphere is created in the hall for worship by use of a candle and a cross. The school is kept in pristine condition, creating a sense of care for God's creation and a positive and uplifting context for the spiritual aspects of learning.

#### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Prayer and worship are used extensively in school and not just during collective worship. A Sikh boy wrote a wonderful 'thank you' prayer that included the line 'Dear Lord, thank You for caring teachers...'. Worship effectively underpins the Christian ethos. Children and staff join in with enthusiasm. All staff show their commitment by helping to lead worship regularly along with the vicar and other visitors. The children are very positive about worship and value it highly. 'I do enjoy worship assemblies and we could not make them better' was one comment. However, several children expressed a desire to be more involved in planning and evaluation. Activities provided have a clear impact on the children's spiritual development. The hushed expectancy as we began worship on inspection day was inspiring, as was the singing. A warm greeting in the Anglican tradition from the headteacher with an appropriate response from the children was followed by the introduction of a visiting speaker. He involved everyone in powerfully re-telling the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Parallels were drawn between the crowd at a football match and the fickle crowd involved in welcoming Jesus one day and calling for His death soon afterwards. The children and parents were left with questions to ponder during Holy Week. 'Was Jesus God's Son or not?' and 'Whose side are you on and why?' The children and staff gain inspiration, spiritual growth and affirmation from worship because of its sincerity and vitality. Ample opportunities for reflection and private prayer help pupils to appreciate the use of silence and being at peace with themselves. The links with the church in worship are good, and the children are in no doubt as to the vicar's importance to the school. They spoke warmly of his involvement in school worship, one boy commenting, 'When we ask questions, he answers them properly!' The meaning and significance of the Eucharist is taught regularly and encouragement given to children who wish to be confirmed. The major festivals are celebrated in church, and parents and governors are very supportive.

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

The headteacher and foundation governors engage with Christian values in developing their vision for the school with conviction. After a series of staff changes the stability achieved and progress made in the last two years are remarkable. All the governors are fully supportive. The headteacher's Christian faith is clearly evident in every aspect of her leadership. The vision is understood by all stakeholders increasingly well, helped by the fact that, as the chair commented, 'There is a high degree of transparency'. The school has already noted that the mission statement is out-dated and not very child-friendly. The vision is lived out by all staff members, who are excellent role models for the children. Governors have close curricular links with co-ordinators, and the vicar is actively involved in teaching RE. His contributions and the generally high quality of RE in the school have a positive impact on the spiritual development of the children. Parents are delighted with the school, and all are given regular and varied opportunities for feedback. Comments from parents included, 'It's really on the up!' 'He's very shy. The school has really boosted his confidence, which is really good,' and 'They come home singing the (worship) songs!'

SIAS report March 2010, St Aidan's CE Primary, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6GX