



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St. Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School Barnsley

Stocks Lane

Barnsley

S75 2DF

Diocese: Wakefield

LA: Barnsley

Dates of inspection: 29th November 2007

Date of last inspection: September 2001

URN: 106631

Headteacher: Mr. C. Lee

SIAS Inspector: Mrs. L. Alvy NS 170

School context

St. Mary's is an average sized primary school located close to the centre of Barnsley. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and /or disabilities is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Mary's as a Church of England school is good with some outstanding features.

This is a school with a real commitment to the development of the 'whole child' within the context of a distinctive Christian family. It sees working closely with parents/carers, governors, church and community as of paramount importance in helping children to enjoy school and to achieve success.

Established strengths

- Children gain confidence and flourish as individuals supported by strong Christian values promoted by the school.
- The significant partnership between school and church enhances children's spiritual development through the creation of Christian vision and purpose.
- The importance given to Collective Worship and Religious Education in the life of the school.

Focus for development

- Build on the good practice in Collective Worship by developing peer assessment and coaching alongside seeking pupils' views.
- Reproduce the school's successful systems for tracking and analysing pupils' progress to support assessment of Religious Education.
- Develop the role of the Foundation Governors further in evaluating the Christian character of the school.

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

Within the strong Christian family at St. Mary's children are helped and encouraged to develop as thoughtful, kind, caring, confident and happy individuals. An effective staff team who bring many talents support and encourage children to form good relationships from an early age. Rooted in Christian beliefs children's spiritual well-being is carefully balanced alongside progress in learning. A parent felt that it was 'really important for children to learn about Christian values and to feel comfortable in a secure environment'. Listening to enthusiastic children confirmed this and in candid conversations they displayed equal confidence in their ability to work hard, to lead prayers, train as Sports Leaders or apply to the School Council for the position of School Buddies, for instance. The school strives for excellence in all it does. This can be seen in the enrichment of the curriculum, in the myriad displays celebrating both children's good achievements and those expressing 'a living faith in God', that daily shapes the inclusive educational environment of the school. These and many other opportunities provided through the strong partnership between school, church and the local community help children to achieve success. Consequently they feel valued and special as a result.

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

Collective Worship has a high status in the school and all staff both lead and take part. The school's inspirational web-site and prospectus leave no doubt that worship is at the heart of school life. Masses to celebrate significant Christian festivals are held in school and an older child wrote sensitively 'mass helps me to realise that I'm a Christian as we sing and prayer together'. Parents and carers give good support for worship both in school and church. Children from the oldest to the youngest sing joyfully and reverently. Their melodic singing and accurate signing is a powerful example of the school's excellent support for children's spiritual well-being through music and song. Time to reflect and ask questions are also built into other areas of the curriculum extending and reinforcing children's spiritual and moral development. A recent review of collective worship has led to more cohesive provision and strengthened the centrality of worship provided by school and parish. Currently the school's accurate self-evaluation has identified the need to involve both children and adults in further assessment of its impact.

The effectiveness of the Religious Education is good.

Provision in religious education is good. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is well within the standard expected. Pupils' achieve well. Recent reorganisation of curriculum planning supports the systematic progression of learning effectively. Skilled subject managers ensure exemplars of good quality teaching and learning are provided so children are effectively questioned and increase their understanding. Attitudes to learning are often excellent and in both lessons seen children worked hard to develop their ideas. A Year 2 lesson effectively led children to reflect on a recent church visit increasing their understanding of the use of religious symbols. By Year 6 children's good quality work of different abilities shows skill in developing religious ideas in relation to the church to-day. Higher attaining children answer questions insightfully showing a very good understanding of beliefs. There are effective links to other subjects such as literacy and information and communication technology. Assessment is currently under review.

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

A strong leadership team with enthusiastic staff and supportive governors lies at the heart of this good church school. An effective partnership between church and school supports its strong Christian vision and ethos. The former incumbent has played an integral part in this growth. Cogent self-evaluation has led to developments in the quality of both Collective Worship and Religious Education. Foundation governors support and care for the school well whilst recently increasing their active participation in aspects of church school evaluation. They are now poised to develop this further by building on the school's strong church foundation. Productive links with parents, parish and community serve to support, celebrate and enhance children's achievement underpinned by the school's commitment to its church school status that wholly encompasses children's education.