



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Birkenshaw First & Nursery Church of England Voluntary Controlled School
Station Lane
Birkenshaw
BD11 2JE

Diocese: Wakefield

LA: Kirklees

Dates of inspection: 11th December 2006

Date of last inspection: July 10th & 11th 2002

School's Unique reference number: 107730

Headteacher: Mrs. A. Holt

SIAS Inspector: Mrs. L. Alvy NS 170

School context

Birkenshaw First and Nursery is a larger than average primary school. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and there are below average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection there has been a significant turnover of staff including the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. The school has Investors In People and Investors in Pupils status. It also holds the Silver ECO schools award.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Birkenshaw First and Nursery as a Church of England school is satisfactory overall.

It has significant strengths in its good level of pastoral care and in the enthusiasm, commitment and determination to develop the Christian character of the school further.

Established strengths

- Relationships between staff and children that result in self-confident, positive and well behaved learners.
- The vision and hard work of the Headteacher and the support of the school community.
- A strong tradition of fund raising that demonstrates children's understanding, care and responsibility for others.

Focus for development

- Raise the profile of the school as a church school through the rigorous self-evaluation of its distinctive Christian character.
- Seek ways to explore the partnership between staff, governors and particularly foundation governors in this process.
- Involve children, parents and governors more fully in the participation and evaluation of acts of worship.

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

Children are happy and really enjoy school because they are confident in the care and support provided by the adults. Older children in particular understand that and talk about 'all working together to make the school better'. As a result relationships are harmonious, based on mutual respect and fostered by the Christian nature of the school. This remains a cornerstone of the school's provision and the hard work by the Headteacher and staff assures parents that all children are valued and given the opportunity to do their best. A parent described it as a 'good balance of Christian care in the school'. Parent's full attendance at Celebration Assemblies for instance demonstrates their support for the continuing success of the school. Success in personal achievement is celebrated joyfully from an early age. In the nursery it's excitement because 'I can do magic writing' as I learn about the nativity or in reception seriously reflecting on the importance of giving. Strength in this early provision effectively underpins children's personal development and culminates in children with a developing spiritual awareness and genuine care for others. Children therefore understand the consequences of behaviour and are eager and proud to offer support as 'play buddies' for instance. Children know their opinions are taken seriously and so they 'really like school' and 'feel school is helping them to do well'

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

Children enjoy a daily act of worship because it is now carefully planned to meet the children's age and aptitudes. Consequently their attitudes to worship are positive and it plays an important part in the life of the school. A developing partnership with the newly appointed Vicar, now a regular visitor to the school, is providing an additional strong Christian input. The children were engrossed as his story of the birth of 'John the Baptist' unfolded and were eager to join in singing and prayer to celebrate lighting the second advent candle. Moments of reflection and stillness are effectively encouraged by the use of such symbols. Children respond with due reverence and sensitivity although there are no mechanisms by which to check their personal response more fully. Worship is appropriately extended to attendance at the local parish church to celebrate major Christian festivals. A group of Year 4 pupils said how much they enjoyed these visits clearly affirming the importance the school attaches to developing their understanding of being part of the local Christian community. At present there are no opportunities for the active involvement of staff, governors, children or their parents in monitoring and evaluating the quality or impact of worship in the school.

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

Since the last inspection there have been a significant number of changes involving leadership figures in both the school and the parish. Throughout this somewhat turbulent time the school has held firmly onto its 'broad Christian upbringing' and distinctive Anglican foundation. Staff and governors are proud of the school's church status within the community and keen to develop this further as part of the self-evaluation process. Strengths in the school's care for children, relationships and the promotion of inclusion in all aspects of school life are effective building blocks towards creating a more explicit Christian ethos that is understood by all. Through the use of questionnaires children and parents for example are given 'a voice' and there is a developing culture of 'working 'together' to improve the school. Progress and achievement are monitored carefully alongside the school's commitment to children's healthy lifestyles and personal development and well-being. Careful consideration is given to the planning for Collective Worship, Religious Education and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education so that each complements the other in the good support for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for instance. However the distinctive Christian character of the school has yet to be considered regularly and so there are missed opportunities to celebrate or challenge the Christian ethos of the school.