



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bowes Hutchinson's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Bowes
Barnard Castle
Co. Durham
DL12 9LG

Diocese: West Yorkshire and the Dales

Local authority: Durham

Dates of inspection: 22 May 2014

Date of last inspection: 25 February 2009

School's unique reference number: 114237

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Matthewman

Inspector's name and number: Lynne Gillions 662

School context

Bowes Hutchinson's Church of England Primary School is a small rural school with 38 pupils all of whom are white British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium is below the national average. In the last year a new Headteacher and Chair of Governors have been appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bowes Hutchinson's Church of England Primary School as a Church of England School are outstanding

- The enthusiasm and passion of the Headteacher is ably supported by the committed staff, governing body and local church in establishing a shared vision and strong Christian ethos.
- The family atmosphere, rooted in Christian values, ensures that children are well nurtured and make excellent progress and achieve very high standards.
- Children's personal spiritual development is strong and they show respect for other faiths and cultures.
- The outdoor environment supports learning, spiritual and social development, reflection and fun!

Areas to improve

- Establish more ways of involving pupils in the planning and delivery of collective worship.
- In religious education (RE), enhance pupils understanding by making more clearly defined links between the beliefs, practices and values of different faiths.

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

Christian values form the foundation stone on which the school's achievements are built. Service, perseverance, humility and generosity were some of the values identified in this school where children are loved and cared for very well and where they are protective towards each other. It feels like a family and the children were described as 'being like siblings'. The use of family groups helps foster the 'sense of belonging' which was felt by all stakeholders. The Christian ethos threads through all areas of school life including the curriculum, relationships and the nurturing and well-being of all its members. This is a community which shares each other's joys and sorrows and is hugely supportive when times are difficult for families or when children need extra support to fulfil their potential. Relationships are strong and people talk of teamwork and being at ease with each other. The school has a high proportion of children with special educational needs whose needs are very well met. Children are happy and they are supported by appropriate interventions in order to make outstanding progress. A number of initiatives are in place to encourage good attendance as the school seeks to ensure every individual aspires to be the best that they can be. Behaviour is excellent and is encouraged with the use of a traffic light system and the underlying Christian values. Children are polite and friendly. They show a maturity and confidence when discussing spiritual issues and this is because the school places a high value on encouraging spirituality with, for example, the teaching of philosophy, the introduction of prayer corners in classrooms and the wonderful outdoor space which includes a Secret Garden and a Gruffalo Walk. Children are strongly encouraged to appreciate their own surroundings but school has made exceptional efforts to increase children's understanding of the world beyond. 'We are teaching them to open out their horizons whilst valuing who they are.' They have links with schools in London and Tanzania. Staff have visited Tanzania and children email their fellow pupils. They have also used Skype to talk to some European children. School is currently developing a link with Sri Lanka. As a result of this commitment they hold the International School Award for Outstanding Development of the International Dimension in the Curriculum. The curriculum is creative and fun and is linked into Christian values. It is enhanced with visits, visitors and working with local artists. During the inspection, children were learning long sword dancing. Extra-curricular clubs such as baking, gardening, art, film, multisports and football enrich the pupils' experience and help ensure that children maintain a really positive attitude to learning and have opportunities to fulfil their potential. School values acts of kindness with a kindness tree in the entrance and photographs of all the children are displayed on family trees in school and in church thereby linking them into the local worshipping community. Indeed, the contributions of the church make a huge impact on the overall Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

All members of the school community recognise that collective worship is a central element of school life and helps to maintain the strong Christian ethos. Children are very positive about worship and recognise that it helps them think through issues and gives them an understanding of Biblical teaching and how it can be applied to their own lives. They like to participate in prayers, readings and drama and enjoy the special services which they take part in at church. They would benefit from a few more opportunities to plan and deliver their own worship times in school. They experience a range of different styles during the week including family group worship where the school is divided vertically into groups and where Christian values and the UNICEF rights of the child provide a focus for their worship. Each week one worship time is led by an officiating minister from a local Anglican or Methodist church which helps children understand the expression of faith in different Christian communities. They understand the importance of Jesus to Christians and they have a growing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The local church has had an interregnum but the school continues to visit each month and hold special celebrations such as Harvest, Christingle, Mothering Sunday and Leavers' services and it has been very well supported by church members. In an act of worship in church during the inspection, led by a local Methodist lay

preacher, the theme was Ascension Day. It was described as 'a going away' or 'a letting go'. Children participated with readings and a poem with responses called Where is God? They sang enthusiastically and at the end of the worship time they went outside and whilst The Grace was said a balloon was released to symbolise letting go. Children clearly felt at home in the church and with the parishioners and parents who had also joined in the worship. They have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and talked about liturgical colours, signs and symbols and the church year. Children recognise the value of prayer and that this is not just for formal situations but can be personal too. They say it is important because 'you can talk to God' and 'you can say sorry' and 'you can reflect on things'. They appreciate the prayer corners in classrooms which they use for their own reflections and personal prayers. Long term plans are in place, which focus on Christian values, Biblical teaching, celebrations and relevant themes. These are shared with officiating ministers and staff who then lead individual collective worship times. Governors regularly attend worship and the quality of worship is monitored by children, staff, parents and governors. Outcomes from this monitoring led to a greater emphasis on Lent and Easter this year with the inclusion of an Ash Wednesday service.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education has high status in school and is taught creatively. This results in a positive attitude from the children who enjoy it. 'It gives you a wider outlook, not just Christian' and 'It's different from other subjects, you think things through' and 'I'm surprised how much I enjoy it!' Standards are high and children make very good progress. They learn about different beliefs and talked freely about their visits to a gurdwara and synagogue remembering details and talking about the generosity of Sikhs and the contents of the ark in the synagogue. They would benefit from more opportunities to explore the links between the beliefs and practices of different faiths. Some pupils in a Key Stage 2 class demonstrated a real enthusiasm to find out, for example, whether all faiths believed in a trinitarian God. Their lesson was focusing on the Trinity and they were exploring the concept of 3 in 1 using a broken egg, a plaited loaf, a range of symbols and the different roles that individuals undertake. In an outstanding Key Stage 1 lesson children were looking at Jesus's boyhood and were making links to their own experiences. They did this by looking at objects and pictures. They readily picked up on a picture of a woman weaving and linked it to their own weaving and the big weaving in the school grounds. They made links to the Romans realising that Jesus had been a boy in Roman times. Using a chain as a visual aid throughout the lesson, links were also made to Christian values and the Early Years theme of water. Children are provided with rich curricular opportunities in blocked units of work for RE each half term and every effort is made in planning to ensure that RE is given status comparable to core subjects. Effective assessment procedures are in place throughout school. The subject is very well led and managed.

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

School is led by a Headteacher with passion and enthusiasm, ably supported by governors and staff who ensure that Christian values are demonstrated in a school where children are loved and nurtured and where learning is fun. Leaders all recognise the huge contribution made by the church in establishing a Christian vision which makes a genuine impact on the lives of the children and their spiritual development. Leaders ensure that this vision is woven through the whole fabric of school life. The school's performance as a church school is systematically monitored by foundation governors and other stakeholders and is discussed at governing body meetings. This helps identify strengths and areas for improvement which can be addressed on the School Development Plan. Governors and staff have access to training to equip them for their roles. The school is involved in a range of partnerships both local and global which result in the children being firmly rooted in their local community whilst enabling them to develop open minds and an understanding of wider global issues.