

Section 50 Inspection of Church in Wales Schools

St David's Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School

Bryn Celyn Road, Pentwyn, Cardiff CF23 7ED

Diocese: **Monmouth**

Local authority: Cardiff

Date of inspection: 11th December 2019

Dates of last inspection: 18th – 21st November 2013

School's unique reference number: 681/3371

Headteacher: Mrs Claire Cook

Inspector's name: Mrs Abigail Beacon

School context

St David's Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School (including nursery) serves the parish of Llanederyn and has 235 children on roll. The school has had challenges since the last inspection, including a transient period of leadership and many impactful staff absences. The headteacher was appointed in September 2018 and a restructure took place in September 2019. The leadership team includes the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher/Additional Learning Needs Coordinator and a teacher with a teaching and learning responsibility.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St David's Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church in Wales school is good.

Since the headteacher's appointment a number of substantial improvements have been made, including a more stable staff team and safer learning environment. The Christian character of the school is a golden thread which stimulates the leadership team and governing body and is further cultivated in the classroom by children and their teachers. The school knows and understands its children and community well and the Christian values are owned by all.

Established strengths

- Children's willingness to engage with faith and values and are increasingly responding to deeper questioning about their own faith.
- A confident and influential pupil voice is starting to make a difference to the Christian nature of the school.
- The ability of the leadership of the school in creating an ethos which is based on Christian values, this has been a significant success particularly over a short period of time.

Focus for development

- Create a purposeful and challenging religious education (RE) curriculum that develops a deeper understanding of Christianity and other faiths.
- Develop innovative approaches for the delivery of collective worship which include children in its planning, delivery and evaluation.
- Develop the effectiveness of all school leaders to monitor the impact of spiritual and cultural distinctiveness across the school community.

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

Almost without exception, parents have made the conscious choice to send their children to St David's as a result of its good reputation of establishing a school community that lives out the Christian values of respect, truth, trust, compassion, friendship and responsibility and the love of Jesus Christ for all. This is also evident in the school's approach to good school attendance and positive behaviour management.

The school aims to become an extension of the Christian home, this is achieved by the distinctly Christian values that are led, developed and supported by the whole school community. The Christian values of the school have a significant positive impact on the moral and social development of nearly all children. The motto 'Learning Together Through Fun, Friendship and Faith' is embodied through each interaction with staff, children and parents.

Opportunities for cultural development and understanding of other world faiths was a priority for development in the previous school improvement plan and some progress has been made in this area, for example the greater emphasis on multi faith displays. However these aspects have not yet been fully developed in the curriculum and in other areas of school life. Children have only a basic awareness of the Christian heritage of Wales and of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.

Children contemplate the values of the half term in a calm and purposeful manner through the use of reflection areas. This was particularly tangible in Foundation Phase classrooms, in one instance, a child was spontaneously dancing to reflective music, when asked about it said they were praying and dancing to the music as it made them feel calm. Strong practical leadership ensures that children respond well and are developing the ability to express their thoughts clearly and with confidence.

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

All members of the school community place value on collective worship, in particular, the newly appointed pupil worship leaders have recently written an action plan to develop worship across the school. Evaluations of worship are completed by children. These are based on learner behaviour, for example, how attentive they are and how they respond to questioning rather than the impact of the worship messages on pupils developing spirituality. Children's participation in worship has recently increased. They now select hymns, are supported to write prayers and are starting to plan worship with the headteacher and local clergy. This is at an early stage of development.

Most children are confident in expressing the importance of God in their own lives and some reference is made to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Many children understand about making the sign of the cross during worship. Few understand the significance of the Trinity as this has not been made explicit to them. They have some recognition of different Christian traditions in worship but this is mainly related to local Church in Wales practice and to some Christian festivals.

Collective worship frequently includes teachings about the life and person of Jesus Christ or the value currently being followed. For instance the class based collective worship observed focussed on 'How can we be compassionate at Christmas?'. Children in Key Stage 2 are respectful and engaged and many see the significance of the video clip of 'The Good Samaritan' and can express different ways to show compassion. Classroom worship in the Foundation Phase is well presented and typifies a strong rapport with children, however, on occasions not all adults in the classroom participate with the worship which reduces the quality of the experience for pupils, particularly those who might require additional support.

Planning gives a basic structure for collective worship although there is a lack of coherence with how themes develop spiritual understanding over time. Children do not clearly express their understanding of the difference between collective worship and RE lessons. There is limited analysis of the impact of collective worship on the school community by either pupils or leaders in the school.

There are a variety of opportunities available to enable children to both pray and reflect, for example the reflection areas in most classrooms. The school is strongly supported in this by their local church and clergy, for example leading weekly collective worship, and, St David's Place, a form of 'Messy Church' linked to the liturgical year.

The effectiveness of religious education is adequate.

Standards of attainment in RE for the majority of children are in line with those of other core subjects. The exemplification of standards and moderation of standards in RE has not yet been developed. This results in a lack of consistency regarding what good attainment looks like and the RE progress tracker may be based on data that cannot be accurately corroborated. The quality of learning and engagement with the subject are generally good but with some variation in some year groups, particularly lower Key Stage 2.

The RE curriculum caters for the learning needs of some learners but those needing either reinforcement or more challenging learning activities are not routinely planned for. It offers some opportunities to understand the main teachings, beliefs and practices of Christianity and supports the values based work of the school but implementation is inconsistent and is therefore not fully effective. Similarly the spiritual and cultural development of children is also less well planned and inconsistently implemented. The curriculum offers some good opportunities to enhance the moral and social development of children. The school has worked hard to try to make the syllabus fit for use, however, children do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of religion, either Christianity, diverse Christian faith communities or other world faiths and non-religious world views.

There is regular monitoring of some aspects of RE and self-evaluation processes are broadly accurate in identifying proprieties for improvement that offer adequate challenge. The RE subject leader is well informed on current developments in RE curriculum, especially responding to the anticipated introduction of the Welsh National Curriculum and the position of RE with other subjects in the Humanities Area of Learning. Under her leadership the school is in a good position to make the appropriate changes needed to improve teaching and learning of and from RE.

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

Since the appointment of the new headteacher, substantial progress has been made in a very short time. An ethos, which is becomingly increasingly based on Christian values, has been created that is recognised by all members of the school community during a time of significant change and challenge for the school.

Parents, in particular, highlight the “lovely welcoming school environment” and the wide range of experiences and areas of responsibility the children are able to have. They indicate that this has a positive influence on their children as they are able to make important decisions about how their school is run and priorities for development. Parents and the church contribute to and enhance school life in such a way that there are clear benefits for learners such as a full range of clubs and groups, with high levels of uptake.

Self-evaluation strategies feed directly into school improvement planning, as a result overall Christian distinctiveness has improved for all groups of children. However, processes to monitor and evaluate the impact of aspects of spiritual and cultural distinctiveness requires development. Leaders ensure that collective worship, RE and aspects of the curriculum are informed by Christian values that contribute to children’s good behaviour, well-being and attitudes, together with their spiritual, moral and social development. The use of ‘Thinking Thursday’ (mixed age groups drawn from across Key Stage 2) is particularly effective in supporting childrens’ welfare and engaging in a wide variety of areas of interest, for example learning about food from other cultures or languages from around the world.

As a result of good leadership and strong support from the governing body the school is in a secure position to successfully build upon the good practice already started. The leadership of worship and RE is given a high priority, this means that prospects for improvement are good.

The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship

Yes

The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education

Yes