# Gwella Inspection of a Church in Wales School

**Bryncoch Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School**

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| Address: | Furzeland Drive, Bryncoch, Neath. |
| Diocese: | Llandaff |
| Local authority: | Neath Port Talbot |
| Dates of inspection: | 6th,7th and 8th June 2017 |
| Date of last inspection: | September 2009 |
| School's unique reference number: | 6713311 |
| Headteacher: | Mrs Kathryn Phillips |
| Inspector's name: | Meryl Plummer |

**School context**

Bryncoch Church in Wales Primary School is a Voluntary Aided Church in Wales school. It serves the Parish of Dyffryn, including the village of Bryncoch, and welcomes applications for available places from the surrounding parishes.

The school is situated in a semi-rural location and the area is relatively prosperous, with 3.2% of pupils eligible for free school meals, placing the school in Group 1 of the National Benchmarking Table. The school is one-form entry and there are currently 197 full time equivalent (FTE) pupils on roll, in 7 classes including a part time nursery. Including the headteacher there are 7.5 (FTE) suitably qualified teachers. Similarly, there are 7.5 FTE appropriately trained additional practitioners. Approximately 19% of pupils are identified as having special educational needs (SEN), of these one has a statement of SEN. Attendance is currently 96.1%

**Established strengths**

The strengths of the school are the:

- vision of the school which reflects the distinct Christian values evident in all aspects of school life
- high standards of behaviour of pupils, reflecting the adults as excellent role models
- pupils' enthusiasm for learning and altruistic approach to their peers
- expertise and excellent subject knowledge of the Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship (CW) coordinators
- work of the Values Group in promoting the Christian Values through engaging Worship sessions
- close effective partnership between the Clergy, Church and school.

## Focus for development

The school has four areas in which to focus development:

- ensure the planning and delivery of the RE curriculum is consistently applied
- include pupil targets for RE in the school's assessment process.
- include the Section 50 evaluation as part of the school self-evaluation process and its targets for improvement as part of the main School Improvement Plan
- further develop and strengthen the evidence base for reporting the impact of RE and CW policies to the Governing Body

The overall judgement for the school is **Good.** The prospects for improvement are **Excellent.**

**KQ1. The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is GOOD at meeting the needs of all learners**

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good, with elements of excellence, at meeting the needs of all learners because there is a clear vision based on sound Christian values at the centre of its work. The school's Trinity vision is instantly evident as you enter into the school. A joint art project between pupils and a parent depicts this vision in illustrating their work with the Church, with the family of the school and in the community.

The multi-purpose hall has a definite Christian ethos. A moveable altar with a cross and two candles are used as the central focus for worship. A prayer box in which pupils are encouraged to place their personal prayers, displayed under the Values Tree, is also used during worship. Many of the displays around the school have a Christian spiritual or moral theme.

The local priest is a regular visitor to the school and is the RE link member of the Governing Body. The school is used twice a month for a Sunday family Eucharist, supporting its mission of '**Making the school a place of witness to the gospel**'. Families from the community are regular worshippers at these services, and parents stated that the services are very popular.

The school's mission is enacted daily and contributes to its success in meeting the spiritual, moral and academic needs of all pupils. The well-developed grounds include a memorial garden, which is used for class worship and as a quiet reflection area. Another reflection area is in the process of being constructed within a willow circle in the grounds: the Values Group envisage that this area will give the school another peaceful place to sit, pray or reflect.

Self-evaluation activities leading to school improvement priorities are effectively deployed to ensure pupils make the expected rate of progress and feel safe and secure in school.

Pupils feel they are listened to and their voice is appreciated in the school. They contribute widely and confidently to its daily life and take their responsibilities seriously. They are able to communicate and reflect on the impact the school's values has on their lives. There is a caring and sharing family ethos in the school - this is extended locally, nationally and internationally through participation in charitable projects and fundraising including Christian Aid, Operation Christmas Child and Children in Need.

**KQ2. The impact of collective worship on the school community is EXCELLENT.**

Collective worship is excellent in Bryncoch because, whether within a class setting or as a combined service, all members of the school community place great personal value on collective worship. It is clearly central to the life of the school and is reverent yet inspiring. It is conducted by staff and pupils with additional participation by pupils during worship, and guided by the chosen value for the half term.

There is an order for class and school worship which is adhered to across the school. Different pupil groups have frequent opportunities to plan and conduct worship which reflect the work of the specific group, and centre around a Christian theme or Bible story. Evidence of planned and evaluated worship from the ECO Group, Heathy Schools Group, E safety and Welsh Group was scrutinised. An excellent system of evaluation of worship is embedded into school life: pupils, governors and staff all contribute, and the outcomes are put into practice by the coordinator working with the Values Group. This has led to significant improvements: for example, an increase in the level of pupil participation and more inspirational songs reflecting the theme of worship. All staff attend whole school worship and there is an open invitation to governors and parents to attend. The reporting of worship activities to governors needs to be developed fully.

Two acts of inspirational worship were observed, each linked with the value of the half term, with a different interpretation. On each occasion a pupil played the piano, which set the tone for worship, with

music to accompany the pupils as they entered the hall. All pupils walked in quietly and took their places with the minimum direction from staff. Staff and pupils use sign-language and recite the Trinity welcome to begin the service. Pupils' singing is excellent. All pupils knew the Lord's Prayer. The Grace was said in Welsh to conclude worship.

The first worship, led by the headteacher and attended by the parish priest and chair of governors, concluded the previous half term's value of Forgiveness. The theme involved pupils and staff sharing times when they have asked forgiveness from their peers and from God the Father. Pupils from the Values Group planned and conducted the second worship, again based on a Bible story and which related to the present half-term's value of Generosity.

Pupils spoke enthusiastically about worship and stated that through their worship they had time for reflection, and the Prayer Box enabled their individual prayers to be shared with the school. They spoke freely about their own faith and their belief in The Trinity. They are proud to be part of a church school, where "worship to Jesus and God the Father and prayer is important" (year 6 pupil). The pupils understood that by lighting the candle, the flame was a visual representation of Jesus, the light of the world, being at the centre of worship. The act of worship is an important part of the school day, and reflection areas, prayer trees and reflection books are integral to all classes. In the school grounds, there is opportunity for individual reflection and class worship in the memorial garden. The pupils particularly enjoy enacting stories from the Bible led by the vicar, the latest being The Prodigal Son.

A Eucharist service is held twice a term for the pupils and staff, and the school celebrates the different seasons in the church's year by worshipping in the local church.

Prayer and reflection continue at home with the introduction of class prayer sacks. One parent commented positively on the use of the prayer sack: *"*Having a Bible sack at home recently gave me an excellent opportunity to talk about my son's concerns with going to sleep at night. Discussing and sharing a prayer has really made a difference to how he feels about bedtime".

**KQ3. The effectiveness of the Religious Education is GOOD**.

The effectiveness of the Religious Education is good, with excellent features. The school is following the Diocesan Scheme of Work (SoW) for RE. The coordinator, working closely with the Acting Diocesan Director, has adapted the scheme to the needs of the school, which embraces the Curriculwm Cymraeg. The focus is clearly on Christianity with other world faiths integrated as part of the scheme. The Values are integral to the scheme and are evident in pupils' books, in the lessons observed and throughout the documentation. The SoW is used by all teachers, although it is not yet consistently applied in all the plans which were scrutinised.

Book scrutiny indicated that there is a fast developing coverage of the SoW and pupils' work is complemented by additional drama presentations and pictorial representation recorded on iPads. Pupils' work is marked in line with the marking policy: where marking is effective it indicates the next steps in learning and encourages pupil response. There is a developing culture of pupil-teacher interaction; however this needs to progress further alongside next steps for pupils on how to improve.

Four lessons were observed, in which teaching ranged from good to excellent. Pupils' thinking was extended and challenged, enhancing their ethical development by discussing complex dilemmas. Differentiation was well planned against success criteria. Other faiths were explored and comparisons made with Biblical texts and Christianity. Good use of open and extension questioning was in place across the four lessons. There was evidence of the use of technology within lessons as a tool to find information, format responses, devise presentations and as a visual aid for the focus of the lesson.

Within the school there is a cycle of pairing and sharing between staff of good practice, led by the subject coordinator and headteacher.

Monitoring and assessment are embedded in RE. Book scrutiny, monitoring of lessons by senior leaders and relevant governors are well documented and evaluative, but the scheme is in its infancy. Planned Learning Walks on Areas of Christian Distinctiveness have taken place with pupils and governors, and impact evaluations are in place. The Church School Attitude Survey is a yearly event, which supplies the school with a wealth of information. The school greatly values the survey and conducts an interim one in order to monitor the effectiveness of the programmes they put in place.

Assessment and tracking are relatively new, but take into account the previous data records. The new records complement the SOW and skills programme. All pupils' achievements are tracked and progress is monitored to ensure the expected rate of progress. RE achievement is reported to parents in the yearly written report and books are available for parents on Open Evenings. There is a close comparison between the pupils' achievements in RE and those of the other core subjects. However there are no specific targets for pupils in RE.

A portfolio of skills is in place and is widely used. Pupils' Voice records effectively determine improvements or adjustments to provision.

**KQ4. The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is GOOD.**

The impact of Christian leadership within the school is good with excellent features. The headteacher has established a clear Christian vision for the school which links strongly to the Christian values. She is central to the family nurturing ethos established in the school and with her team has enabled many developments to take place. All members of staff demonstrate a personal commitment to the ethos and the fundamental Christian values of the school. They are excellent role models for the pupils, displaying respect for each other, the environment and the community.

There are well established links with the clergy and congregation. The incumbent is a frequent visitor and the pupils know him well and speak highly of his work in the school.

The Chair and Vice Chair of Governors promote the distinctive Christian features of the school and have a good understanding of its work. Governors are well informed about the work of the school and regularly visit the school to take part in worship as well as in activities such as book scrutiny, data presentation, classroom observations and presentations by pupils. Nearly all visits are well documented, evaluated, and reported to the governing body. However there are no written reports on RE or CW in the governors' records: governors report that they have received verbal reports.

Partnership working is developing well in school, within the diocese and within the school cluster. The school has invested in the professional development of the coordinators for RE and CW

Parents affirm that the Christian values and high aspirations of the school have a positive impact on the behaviour and confidence of the pupils. They agree that the school has a strong family ethos and that the school's open door policy ensures accessibility. Parents believe the staff are positive role models for their children.

Areas for development from the previous Section 50 inspection have been addressed. However there are a few areas which the school has identified that need to be enhanced, such as extending the marking policy to include pupil responses and self and peer assessment, and including priorities for RE in the school's strategic plans, with clear criteria for improvement and costing.

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| **The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship** | **YES** |
| **The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education** | **YES** |

*The inspector is grateful for the care and consideration in the school's presentation of information given during the inspection period.*