

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Christ Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street, Walshaw, BURY, BL8 3AX

Diocese: Manchester

Local authority: Bury
Dates of inspection: 1 October 2012
Date of last inspection: 18 September 2007
School's unique reference number: 105341
Headteacher: Mr Ian Young
Inspector's name and number: Rev David J Halford 623

School context

The school is broadly average in size and has Nursery provision. It serves families from a wide range of social circumstances. The majority of pupils are from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number of pupils on the register of special educational needs. The school has achieved a wide range of national awards and since the last inspection has attained Eco-School Green Flag status.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church Walshaw as a Church of England school are outstanding

The school was last inspected in 2007, when it was judged to be outstanding. It is to be congratulated in sustaining this position over time. The care for its children is outstanding, and the commitment of the staff, in promoting excellent learning and a deep sense of purpose in all it undertakes, are hallmarks of its success. Children respond really positively to this with outstanding behaviour together with especially purposeful attitudes to their learning.

Established strengths

- An outstanding Christian ethos at the heart of the school.
- High standards in the teaching of religious education.
- Particularly effective links with the parish church and a staff fully committed to sustaining excellence.

Focus for development

- Broaden pupils' understanding by promoting increased involvement with multi-faith leaders and communities.
- Embed recently established assessment procedures within Religious Education provision.

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

Excellent relationships lie at the heart of the sustained performance of the highest standards. Spiritual development, seen in the school environment and displays, together with worship and in the development of pupils' self-esteem, is excellent. The Christian ethos of the school is particularly strong and evident in all aspects of school life. Staff and pupils alike model Christian values such as caring for each other and promoting self-esteem consistently. Children say they enjoy coming to school, and this can be seen immediately on approaching the school in the enjoyment of children in the outdoor area of the Early Years provision. Pupils are proud of the wide range of tasks they undertake. Recent work in designing a logo for the school's 150th anniversary and the quality of work on display at such an early stage in the school year is particularly creditable. Pupils approach their tasks with purpose and maturity and as result demonstrate a high degree of responsibility and moral and social awareness. For example, they benefit greatly from the school's work in the community and in supporting charitable causes, which is extensive and highly valued. Pupils say they feel safe and know that their opinions are valued. Behaviour is outstanding, even though there is significant movement across a wide-ranging site at different times of the day, and pupils of all ages are friendly and polite.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The last report indicated the vital importance of collective worship and the excellent behaviour of all the participants. This has been fully sustained. It is clear that collective worship is very central to the success of this school. In the act of worship observed, pupils were thoroughly attentive throughout, fully engaged on the headteacher's focus and demonstration of the act of 'changing water into wine'. The atmosphere was excellent and pupils across the whole age range were thoroughly engaged. Singing was well pitched and the words were sung with joy and enthusiasm. The concluding song was particularly memorable, with actions developing in complexity, and as the pupils left the hall (oldest pupils first) to return to their classes, the youngest children were left to complete the singing. Far from being anxious by this situation, they sang with real enjoyment and enthusiasm and a surprising degree of accuracy for so early in the school year. It was particularly memorable and a joy to behold. Collective Worship is planned and resourced excellently, and support from the church is very strong. Discussion with staff indicates that there is a very thorough confidence in the school's effective delivery of worship. This area of the school's provision is very effective. The last report commented on the quality of the 'spiritual atmosphere in which the presence of God is acknowledged and celebrated' and this has been fully sustained during the intervening period. Pupils were particularly attentive during the prayers and as a whole, this area of the work of the school is very thorough and contributes very strongly to the personal development of the pupils. Overall, this represents outstanding provision and impact.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Teaching and learning in religious education are outstanding. Many examples were observed in the lessons seen. For example, in the Year 3 lesson observed at the start of the day teaching was of the highest quality. The sustained pace of the lesson and the systematic manner in which pupils worked together, discussing well-chosen biblical references, and recalling past work, was exemplary. Discussion with pupils indicated that the systems in place were well-embedded in the school's provision; a clear indication of their success in sustaining pupils' interest and resulting in outstanding progress. Other lessons observed across the school, from the delivery of the Creation story in the Nursery to the prayers being written by older pupils, demonstrated a really high level of engagement on the part of the pupils. The examination of pupils' past and present work – all of which was carefully presented and thoroughly marked, are clear indications of why the school has sustained its high quality in its delivery of religious education. All these outstanding learning activities reflect consistent teaching and leadership of the highest quality. The subject is coordinated excellently. The staff have a very thorough subject knowledge and this is central to the success school has in maintaining its high standards over time. The religious education curriculum has a very high profile in school. It is very successful in establishing links with other subjects effectively and ensuring that children build upon their prior learning and developing knowledge and understanding. The high priority given to the teaching and provision of this area of the school's work is clearly a very important element in promoting the distinctly Christian foundation of the school.

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

The school has sustained this outstanding level of effectiveness since the last inspection. Despite this, there is evidence of very thorough curriculum review by staff and effective leadership from pupils also. Pupils are very proud of the Green Flag Eco-Status, which has been gained since the last inspection, and are articulate in explaining how it is sustained. They show maturity of thought and purposeful leadership in this aspect of school life. Separate groups of staff and governors have undertaken reviews of their areas of responsibility and have produced a most thorough document to ensure that the school's vision of further development is thoroughly coherent and understood by all. It provides a very clear picture of the school's current position, identifies where the school is successful, and what it needs to undertake to sustain the position of excellence which it currently holds. It is an impressive and comprehensive document. In it the school has accurately identified that continuing to develop its links with multi-faith communities would enhance its overall provision. This aims to further improve its current provision for pupils by broadening their understanding of faith and lifestyles which are different from their own. With the school's justified confidence and strength of purpose in its current provision, this potential development is very purposeful. The review also indicates an evaluation of its recently implemented assessment procedures within its provision for religious education. In a school with such a proven record of sustained high performance, the inspection provides confidence that these areas of development will be addressed with rigour and professionalism.