

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bentley St Paul's Church of England (VA) Primary School

Ashwells Road
Brentwood
Essex
CM15 9SE

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex
Dates of inspection: 21st March 2013
Date of last inspection: 1st May 2008
School's unique reference number: 115151
Headteacher: Mrs Louise Putt
Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Jones 723

School context

Bentley St. Paul's Church of England Primary School is an average –sized primary school situated in a semi-rural location at the edge of Brentwood. Although part of the building dates back to 1864 when the school was founded, it nevertheless provides a modern, attractive well-resourced environment appropriate to the needs of the children. Children are mainly white British and the number eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of children with Special Educational Needs is in line with the national picture. The Headteacher has been in post for approximately a year and a half and a new leadership team has been established since her appointment.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bentley St Paul's as a Church of England school are outstanding

The profound impact of the school's specific Christian values and the excellent partnership the school has with St Paul's Church combine very successfully to define and underpin the school's Christian distinctiveness. These Christian values weave their way extremely effectively throughout the school, strongly influencing a deep commitment to high standards, very positive attitudes and excellent behaviour. This results in an exciting Christian environment within which children flourish and achieve.

Established strengths

- The excellent leadership and clear direction provided by the headteacher
- The commitment to listening and responding to the views expressed by all members of the school community and in particular the strength of the 'pupil voice' within the school
- The excellent relationships that exist between all members of the school community
- The centrality and impact of specific Christian values on behaviour, attitudes and achievement

Focus for development

- To create identified spaces around the school to better enable opportunities for quiet and reflection
- To broaden the children's appreciation of community by further developing links beyond the immediate locality
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The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

As a result of the all-pervading Christian ethos and very well-embedded distinctive Christian values, the behaviour and attitudes of the children are excellent. In consequence, standards of achievement are high and governors and members of staff confidently have high expectations of the children. The school's deep concern for each child as an individual is clearly evident. One parent said, 'It is such a caring community; every member of staff knows my child.' Another parent added, 'Every child is seen as an individual. All are allowed to be themselves and to feel that they belong. They are taught real Christian values that my child often talks about at home.' The Christian character of the school has a very significant impact on the children's awareness of their place in the wider community. Excellent

links are established with the local church, other local Christian groups and organisations such as the nearby hospice and a local residential home. These links contribute very effectively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children. Currently few links have been established beyond the immediate locality to develop the children's wider understanding of community. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent. Children and parents report that any concerns they ever have are always addressed speedily and very effectively. Governors and all members of staff are committed to and model very well the Christian values of the school. The school environment, through high quality displays such as banners depicting the school's Christian values, prayer boards and the general sense of calm and order throughout the school strongly influence the children's spiritual development. At the moment no spaces have been created for quiet reflection to add to the school's provision for spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship lies at the heart of school life setting the climate for the day and providing adults and children with excellent, inclusive and affirming opportunities for prayer, worship and reflection. One governor said, 'Worship connects with other areas of school life and helps to create a true sense of community and belonging.' Children are very thoroughly engaged and speak with great enthusiasm about their experiences of collective worship. They appreciate the opportunities they have to plan and deliver whole school assemblies. One child said, 'Our assemblies are really special. Prayer is very important at our school.' Prayer is a constant feature of the school both in collective worship and in classes, very effectively contributing to the school's Christian distinctiveness. Classes produce their own prayer books and a prayer, usually written by a child, is always included in the weekly newsletter for parents. Prayer, reference to the Bible, worshipping in song, using symbols such as a cross and a candle very effectively enable children to develop an understanding of Anglican traditions and practice. Collective worship is planned very thoroughly taking account of the school's Christian values and the Christian calendar and children speak very positively about the systems in place for them to evaluate collective worship. Regular Eucharist services held in the church are a very positive feature of the worship life of the school and contribute very effectively to the children's spiritual development and growing understanding of the Christian faith. These services are much appreciated by all members of the school community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Exciting and appropriate teaching strategies are employed that highly motivate and fully engage the children enabling them to make excellent progress. Standards of achievement in RE are well above expected levels in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Lessons challenge children to think and reflect very deeply about a range of religious ideas and experiences and to consider the extent to which these might be relevant to their own lives. For example, in an excellent lesson about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the children very sensitively explored the agonising choice being faced by Jesus. After a moment of reflection and then discussion with their talk partners the children talked about a range of life situations, for example peer pressure, where they might have to choose between doing the right but difficult thing or doing something else. Such challenges contribute very effectively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children. RE makes a major contribution to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. The school's Christian values are consistently referenced and Christian teaching is sensitively applied to the lives and experiences of the children. During teaching about other world faiths, children are taught to be accepting and respectful of the views and practices of others. RE is very well led with the result that the subject has a very high profile in the school alongside other core subjects. The subject leader makes excellent use of opportunities to observe lessons, scrutinise work and evaluate findings from assessment data to identify next steps in RE development.

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

School leaders and governors have worked extremely effectively involving all groups within the school community to identify and embed clear, specific Christian values. These are now central to every aspect of school life and result in a school community that is very caring and inclusive while at the same time being deeply committed to school improvement and raising standards of achievement. A governor said, 'The school's Christian values have a profound influence on its Christian distinctiveness.' All members of the school community, particularly the children, know what the school's values are, can

explain them and understand the very positive impact they make on attitudes and behaviour. Governors and school leaders undertake rigorous self-evaluation and listen very carefully to the views of other members of the school community. This includes a 'Faith and Worship' group of children and a parent's focus group. For example, as a result of listening to the views of the 'Faith and Worship' group, assemblies now include additional new songs and children have more regular opportunities to lead collective worship. The ability of leaders and governors to listen to and effect change as a result of what they hear is a significant strength of the school. The headteacher and governors carefully plan for the future through effective systems of performance review, growing new leaders and when appointing new members of staff in order to both protect and develop the school's Christian distinctiveness. The impact of partnership, particularly in terms of the church and local community, is a highly effective feature of the school and as a result children have a clear view of their place in the world.

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