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THE CHURCH
IN WALES

Gwella Inspection of a Church in Wales School

Pen-y-Fai Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Rd, Pen-y-Fai, Bridgend CF31 4LX

Diocese: Llandaff
Local authority: Bridgend
Dates of inspection: 23, 26-7 September 2016
Date of last inspection: November 2010
School's unique reference number: 672/3013
Headteacher: Mr M Street
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Dilys Williams, NS Registration Number 511.

School context

Pen-y-Fai Primary School, in the village of Pen-y-Fai on the outskirts of Bridgend, is in a new school building (since November 2013) in an area which is relatively prosperous. Its 229 pupils span the age range 3-11. Only 2.5% of the pupils receive free school meals (national average 20%) and 11% require special educational needs (national average 25%). 5% are from ethnic minorities and most pupils are from homes where English is the predominant language.

The pupils are taught in eight classes, two of which contain a mixed age range. The school has a headteacher and deputy headteacher, seven (6 if you're not counting Trevor) full-time teachers, two part-time teachers, eight teaching assistants.

Established strengths

The strengths of the school are:

- its distinctive Christian character which has a positive impact on children's attitudes and behaviour
- its nurturing and inclusive family environment, underpinned by the school's Christian values
- imaginative, colourful and stimulating Christian displays and artefacts throughout the school which help to enrich the spiritual development of the children
- its Collective Worship which is central to the daily life of the school and has a positive impact on both staff and children
- the children's involvement in local and international charities which helps them to consider the needs of others.

Focus for development

The school has six areas in which to focus development:

- involve staff, children and the local priest in creating a more effective long term planning document for Collective Worship
- review and rewrite the Diocesan Religious Education scheme of work so that it meets the needs of all children at Penyfai school
- involve fully the Governing Body in the daily life of the school in order to strengthen their role as 'critical friends'
- create a variety of approaches for evaluating Collective Worship and gather the views of the children and staff in order to enhance future planning and development
- ensure all children are challenged by more consistent and aspirational teaching to develop their knowledge and understanding in Religious Education
- create a worship group to include pupils, headteacher and local priest

Prospects for Improvement

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

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

The strong Christian ethos of the school is evident as soon as one enters the building. Efforts have been made to ensure that everyone knows and feels they are in a Church in Wales school. Displays and artefacts are fresh and colourful. They reinforce the Christian message and values of the school, and provide many opportunities for developing the children's spirituality, thinking and inquiry skills. The worship areas in both the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 are vibrant and imaginatively created, emphasising the importance of prayer and worship in the daily life of the school. Children were eager to talk about the prayer baskets, books of prayers written by themselves and the 'shout out tree'.

Children's achievement is good. They do well at expected levels of attainment in all subjects, but since 2014 there has been a fall in achievement at the higher levels. Boys' performance in some areas is below expectation, but these issues and the concerns about stretching the more able pupils already form part of the School Improvement Plan.

Children enjoy their Religious Education (RE) lessons and are able to link what they are taught to what they learn in Collective Worship and the current school Christian value. A scrutiny of books showed that too many worksheets have been used, but there was evidence of extended writing tasks and teacher comments were generally helpful and often included a literacy as well as an RE focus. There were some delightful examples of prayer writing and some children had written thoughtful responses to focused tasks. Lesson observations showed that children were attentive, made good progress, were well behaved and were particularly good at making oral responses. Teaching was generally good with some aspects of excellence seen in some areas. Teachers used a variety of teaching and learning styles and had a good rapport with the children. However, the RE scheme of work could include more challenge and aspirational activities to enhance and stimulate children's learning.

The children have a strong involvement in local and international charities. They show good understanding of the needs of those who have less than themselves, of other global faiths and the role of Christian charities in supporting people around the world.

Parents are happy with the school and feel that "nothing is too much trouble for the staff". They like the reinforcement of Christian values and the way their children talk about the values at home. One parent mentioned the children's involvement in charity work and the way they were encouraged to think of others. Another parent said "a wonderful school, with a wonderful Christian ethos". A third said "my son is always telling us about the messages he hears in school and in assembly. He loves Bible stories and we are pleased that he is encouraged to learn about Christian values". "This is a school where the child is at the centre of everything", was a comment made by one of the governors.

Penyfaï school shows itself to be a caring, nurturing Christian community where teachers, office staff, kitchen staff, the site supervisor and all other support staff are prepared to go the extra mile to ensure the children are happy as they make their journey through the school.

KQ2. The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is GOOD.

Collective Worship is an important part of the daily life of the school and children talk enthusiastically about the different aspects they most enjoy. The multi-use hall is prepared sensitively for worship, so that the worship table, candles and Bible are the main focus as children enter. Slides are displayed above the altar table highlighting the Christian theme and encouraging the children to think about and prepare for worship.

In the three acts of worship observed, children sang with reverence and passion, were attentive and willingly responded to the leaders. There were aspects of excellence in all three worship sessions. In the two whole school worship sessions, the headteacher and his deputy created a very special atmosphere. Children's behaviour was excellent and both leaders captured everyone's attention as they delivered the gospel message. A time for prayer and reflection involved the leaders and children. Some prayers were done in Welsh, others were recited by everyone present and time was given for children to make their contribution through spontaneous prayer.

The observed class worship took place in the Key Stage 2 worship area, a siting which made the worship more meaningful. The children played musical instruments and were totally focused on their singing

which was a delight to watch and listen to. The prayers, said in Welsh and English, had been written by the children themselves. One boy said “please help me to keep Jesus in my Christmas”. Children showed respect to everyone who was present and made some sensitive responses to each other.

The school maintained links with the local church despite the fact that there was not a priest in post for a number of months. Worship took place at the church during the interregnum for the major festivals and children spoke positively about their visits. A priest has recently been appointed and is already very involved with the school. He has taken whole school worship and will continue to do so on a regular basis.

Collective Worship could be enhanced by creating a worship group to ensure planning and delivery are of a consistently high standard and to ensure the children’s thoughts and ideas are considered. Clearer and more child-friendly evaluation procedures of the worship, by children and staff, could be used to develop and enrich acts of worship at the school.

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

The headteacher runs the school as a distinctive and inclusive Christian community. Although he is relatively new to his post, his Christian vision for the school is emerging and his quiet charismatic style of leadership is beginning to have a positive impact on his staff.

The senior leadership team are building on the strong Christian foundations already in place and are determined to move the school forward, supported by staff, governors and the priest. They are clear about their roles and are involved in the strategic direction of the school, which is informed by the whole school self-evaluation. They live out the Christian values of the school, ensuring all children feel welcome, safe and happy.

All staff are involved in the process of the school’s self-evaluation and the setting of school improvement targets, and these are included in their CPD training. The targets include improving the Christian aspects of the school and have absorbed the recommendations made in the previous Section 50 inspection.

Governors are being encouraged to play a greater role in the strategic development of the school. Improvement Plans are discussed at governors meetings and specific roles have been allocated. Governors are linked to each of the improvement targets, including priority 5 which has RE as its focus. They are being encouraged to be involved on a more regular basis and to become ‘critical friends’ for the headteacher and the school.

Parents find the new headteacher approachable and are pleased with the way communication with them has improved. They feel they are being kept informed with regular newsletters and other communication methods.

Children feel they are listened to and that they make a contribution to any changes that are made in the school community. The School Council are very committed to fund raising and made a very detailed power point presentation to both the Estyn team and the Section 50 inspector. The children were confident, well spoken and passionate about their school.

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