

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Brinscall St John's C of E / Methodist Primary School**

Harbour Lane  
Brinscall  
Chorley  
PR6 8PT

**Diocese: Blackburn**

**Methodist District: Lancashire**

Local authority: Lancashire  
Date of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012  
Date of last inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007  
School's unique reference number: 119705  
Headteacher: Miss Annette Cupit  
Inspector's name: Mrs Lesley Brookbanks

#### **School context**

The school has a joint Church of England and Methodist foundation; one of only a small number in the country. There is a close relationship between the school, both churches and the village that ensures the school is at the very heart of the community it serves. The majority of children live within the village and are of white British ethnicity. The number of children taking free school meals is well below the national average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Brinscall St John's as a Church of England / Methodist school are outstanding**

Brinscall St John's is an outstanding Church school. Christian values and attitudes inspire every aspect of school life and make a major contribution to children's spiritual development. Children are valued, nurtured and encouraged to flourish both personally and academically within a creative learning environment. The links with the Anglican and Methodist churches are exceptionally strong, vibrant and mutually beneficial.

#### **Established strengths**

- The Christian vision and commitment of the headteacher.
- The way in which the Christian ethos of the school supports the spiritual, personal and academic development of all pupils and staff.
- The strong and mutually supportive links between the school, the Anglican and Methodist Churches and the community.

#### **Focus for development**

- Further enhance the role of governors in self evaluation of church school distinctiveness through the newly formed Values, Vision and Faith Committee.
- Identify a set of core values to make Christian values explicit.
- Refine worship planning to ensure a clear overview of the way a theme is to develop during each week.

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

Relationships between all stakeholders and the local community are outstanding. Agreeing the school's recently reviewed mission statement, 'Precious in God's sight, living, loving, learning', involved the whole school community. Parents speak highly of the ethos and Christian values promoted by the school and the very positive impact this has on their children. They appreciate the excellent individual care provided; 'This is a wonderful, caring, Christian school. The teachers are dynamic and imaginative and really care about the

children'. Another parent commented, 'This school has made God part of my son's life'. The school's commitment to the spiritual development of children and care for God's creation is exemplary through its extensive commitment to Eco-schools. There are worship areas in classrooms and quality opportunities for reflection in RE, worship and across the curriculum. Bright and interactive displays, artwork relating to RE, Christian symbols and prayers can be seen in all areas of the school. These displays promote the Christian foundation of the school to full effect. The behaviour of children towards each other is outstanding; they are gracious, compassionate and encouraging. They know that their opinions are valued and that they will be listened to. A school council member summarised saying, 'we respect each other, we're all unique'. Children demonstrate practical understanding of their role in local, national and global communities through Fairtrade. Well established and active links with children in schools in and beyond the UK provide opportunities for children to experience the diversity of different faiths and cultures. The school works closely and creatively in partnership with the local clergy. A large number of children attend the local churches and participate in joint events, for example as actors in 'Brinscall to Bethlehem' an annual re-enactment of the Christmas story which takes place in the village. A governor quite rightly commented that 'the school lives its faith'.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Worship is at the heart of the school and inspires its day to day actions. Children respond very well to worship and enjoy its variety. They speak freely and with enthusiasm about worship and the impact of songs, Bible stories, role play, drama, reflection and prayer. Worship is led by the headteacher, members of the leadership team, the Anglican and Methodist clergy as well as the chair of governors. Parents appreciate that they are regularly welcomed to share in worship in school and in both churches, describing the experience as 'happy and interactive'. On the day of the inspection, worship was led by the headteacher and the Anglican vicar. Children performed an important role in preparing the worship table and hall for worship. There were opportunities for silent reflection and contemplation, as well as celebratory praise through music and singing. The children's responses to questions were thoughtful and showed an understanding of how the stories that Jesus told can impact on our lives today. Worship ended with the whole school holding hands and sharing the grace. The sincerity and relevance of worship ensures that both pupils and staff are encouraged to grow spiritually and are personally affirmed. One child commented, 'Worship tells us how God wants us to be, we know God is with us'. Children value the importance of prayer as well as quiet times before they pray, 'We talk to God because he is our friend'. Reflective, quiet areas in each classroom are well resourced and are used to enhance children's spiritual development at different times through the day. Prayer notebooks in classrooms as well as a prayer focus in the school entrance enable children to write their own prayers and offer their own prayers for special people. Children articulate a good understanding of the importance of prayer for Christians. They talk about places in the school's outdoor environment where they can be quiet and talk to God. Children appreciate the opportunities given to them to lead and participate in worship. Significant acts of worship are regularly planned and led by each class and by the Year 6 worship group. Worship is regularly evaluated with the children. The choice of worship themes has more recently been influenced by the children's evaluations. The chair of governors meets with the school council to discuss their response to worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

The overall standard of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children express great enthusiasm for their religious education (RE) lessons. They appreciate being challenged to think deeply. A creative approach delivers RE through drama, role play and discussions as well as providing many opportunities for reflection. Children relate learning to their own lives, for example, explaining in great detail the messages behind the story of the mustard seed told to them using Godly play. In a unit of work on the Bible, Year 5 children generated their own questions to investigate, enabling them to direct their own learning. One child stated, 'The Bible is like a treasure chest because God's so precious to us'. In lessons, children's understanding grows because they actively participate in the many opportunities to reflect on and discuss issues. During one lesson introducing special places, the teacher inspired a true sense of awe and wonder – faith was explicit and the way spirituality was nurtured through circle time and reflection was outstanding. In another lesson, rules for living were introduced using a range of strategies. Children responded sensitively; they demonstrated confidence in their moral awareness, were enthusiastic as well as quietly reflective. They identified what

influences their lives and made clear links with Christian values. The RE subject leader is enthusiastic and highly effective. A detailed whole school portfolio of good quality, accurately assessed work demonstrates the high standards expected, which ensures standards across the school remain high. Progression is very good. Class journals provide a record of discussions, role play and special times in lessons not easily recorded elsewhere. Monitoring and evaluation of RE is rigorous and purposeful. It informs next steps and training for the development of the subject across the school. For example, children who have been identified as gifted and talented in RE have worked with the subject leader as well as with the diocesan schools adviser to further develop their thinking skills. Children demonstrate the enjoyment and importance of learning about other faiths in order to respect and understand others.

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

The headteacher's strong Christian vision for the school shines through all aspects of her leadership. She is highly effective and well respected. Christian values underpin the life of the school which is centred on the Christian faith and example of Jesus. Children, staff and parents clearly articulate this vision. The headteacher is very well supported through the enthusiasm and commitment of the senior leadership and all members of staff. The headteacher supports and develops her staff very well and shows a commitment to the wider needs of church school education through teachers from the school being appointed to positions of influence in other primary schools. The subject leader for religious education is outstanding and ensures that religious education continues to have a high profile and high reputation. The clergy from the Anglican and Methodist churches are regular visitors. They lead worship and work cooperatively with the school. Relationships with parents are excellent. Church services and wider ecumenical activities involving the school and local community are very well supported by children and families. The school governors are proactive in self evaluation and know their school very well. They are actively involved in its day to day life. Governors recently established a 'Values, Vision and Faith' committee. Its remit: to further explore and develop self evaluation of church school distinctiveness and core Christian values.

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