



Gwella Inspection of a Church in Wales School

Henllys Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School

Ty Canol Way, Henllys, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 6JA

Diocese: Monmouth
Local authority: Torfaen
Dates of inspection: 10 - 14 February 2017
Date of last inspection: June 2010
School's unique reference number: 6783330
Headteacher: Mr M Durbin
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Dilys Williams, NS Registration Number 511.

School context

Henllys Church in Wales Primary School, opened in 1991, is situated on the outskirts of Cwmbran in the County Borough of Torfaen, serving the extended benefice of Cwmbran. It is a well-designed and well-equipped school, with spacious play areas and a games field. Every Sunday, the school becomes a church and is known as the Worship Centre.

There are 202 pupils on roll, in the age range 4-11. Most are from homes which are neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged, whilst around a quarter come from relatively prosperous homes. 3% are entitled to free school meals (Wales average 18%). Nearly all are of white ethnic origin and none are from Welsh-speaking homes. 13% are on the SEN register and one child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

The one form entry school has a Headteacher, 7 full time teachers and 6.5 Learning Support Assistants (LSAs).

Established strengths

The strengths of the school are:

- the strong relationships between the local clergy and the school
- its Christian character, enhanced by the hall being used as a Worship Centre each Sunday
- the Christian commitment of the teachers and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and their care and support of all pupils
- the Christian displays in corridors and classrooms which enrich the ethos of the school.

Focus for development

The school has 6 areas in which to focus development:

- ensure all staff are involved in writing the Section 50 Self Evaluation Report, and governors are kept informed
- improve communication between the headteacher and parents so that they are kept informed about the school, especially how the school plans to remove its current Amber status
- develop the Diocesan Scheme of Work to ensure it includes sufficient challenge for more able pupils and meets the needs of all learners
- include in the School's Development Plan (SDP) priorities to enhance the Christian aspects of the school
- introduce a consistent and systematic monitoring and evaluation system for collective worship (CW) and religious education (RE) so that it can feed future planning for improvement
- enrich CW by introducing more focused reflection time and greater pupil involvement.

Prospects for Improvement

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

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

Pupils are cared for, supported and guided by teachers and LSAs, who are committed to nurturing and promoting the Christian ethos of the school.

Most pupils recognise the distinctive characteristics of the school's Christian values and talk about how they affect their daily lives. They are able to see the connections between the Christian values and the Bible stories they are taught in RE lessons and in CW. The twelve values were chosen by the parents and staff in the school.

The 'Worship Workers' are a group of children who are a powerful voice in the school for helping to promote the Christian ethos. They take their role seriously and were eager to talk about their activities in planning and leading worship, asking pupils what they enjoyed about worship and what changes they would like to make. They work with pupils in the Foundation Phase, teaching them simple Bible stories and supporting them in understanding the Christian message. They talked with confidence, their responses were mature and they were able to articulate their personal Christian beliefs. One pupil said, "everyone is special because we are all a big family created in God's image".

Pupil behaviour is good, with most behaving well in CW and in lessons. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evidenced by their clear appreciation of what they have in comparison to other people around the world. Pupils talked about the money they had raised for a range of charities, both locally and internationally.

Pupils understand the purpose and importance of prayer and there are regular opportunities for prayer in the school day. All classes have a 'prayer bear' and a prayer writing book, which go home with a different pupil each week. The pupil and the parents write a prayer in the book and the prayers are then shared in worship. The inspector read some lovely prayers in these books: they were sensitive, thoughtful, imaginative and made a positive impact on the pupils.

Pupil achievement is good but there has been some fluctuation in attainment in some year groups over the last few years. The school development plan has a priority to "raise standards of achievement for all pupils in core subjects". Challenging the more able child should also be included as a priority.

Parents are pleased with the arrival of the new rector and her curate. They are already engaged with the school and are having a positive impact on enhancing its Christian character. One example of their involvement was the school's response to Halloween, in which the clergy, congregation, staff and PTA held a light festival at the school. The pupils enjoyed the event and hope it will happen again next year.

The curate's impact has been felt throughout the school: six of the older pupils were confirmed in October 2016 and two members of staff are being prepared for baptism and confirmation this term.

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

Collective Worship plays an important role in developing the Christian ethos of the school. It takes place on a daily basis and is relevant to the life experiences of the pupils.

In the two CWs observed by the inspector, pupils entered quietly to background music, the worship table was set up using the candles, Bible and appropriate cloths for the church year. This worship table is also used for Sunday worship and therefore emphasises the distinctive features of Church in Wales practice. Both the leaders engaged the pupils with a clear gospel message and pupils responded very well to questioning, joined in the formal prayers and sang with enthusiasm. It was felt that Collective Worship sessions could be enriched by introducing more focused reflection time and greater pupil involvement.

Whole school worship is led by the headteacher, staff, local clergy and visitors on a regular basis. Once a week, Key Stage worship takes place to focus on the needs of the different age groups. Eucharist is celebrated on a half-termly basis at the school, and some parents, governors and members of the Sunday congregation attend. At Christmas and at other special times in the year a service is held at the Parish church. This ensures pupils experience the different types and styles of worship.

During the year, pupils visit a number of cathedrals in Wales and England. These visits help them to understand the importance and significance of their Welsh heritage and the traditions of the Church in Wales.

The CW coordinator has ensured that worship runs smoothly, is connected to the school's Christian

values and that pupils understand the importance of linking the values to stories from the Bible. She has assisted the worship workers to play their role and is ably supported by the link governor for RE. There is evidence that CW is evaluated by pupils and staff, and some of the suggested improvements have been put in place. However, one pupil commented that “we hear a lot of the same stories”.

KQ3. The effective of Religious Education is GOOD.

Religious Education is given a high profile in the school and is taught as a core subject. It is led well by a knowledgeable and dedicated coordinator. She supports teachers to ensure they are able to find the resources and can link what they teach to the Christian values.

Lessons are well planned using the Diocesan Scheme of Work, but more needs to be done to make the Scheme of Work fully applicable to the needs of pupils in the school, especially in stretching the more able.

Four lessons were observed. In all four, teaching was good and a variety of different teaching styles were used effectively. Teacher-pupil relationships were good, enabling pupils to be responsive to the activities which were introduced. In two lessons, Godly Play strategies were used which held the pupils attention throughout and reinforced learning. Teachers used some imaginative questions which encouraged pupils to express their feelings and also developed individual thinking skills. Lessons were well organised and pupils moved seamlessly into the different activities.

The RE coordinator has introduced the Diocese of Llandaff’s tracking system to ensure RE is assessed and monitored in the same way as the other core subjects. To assist with this procedure, pupils have personal assessment sheets attached to the back of their RE books, which should ensure they know what level they are working at and what they have to do to improve. There is still some work to be done to embed the tracking system and ensure pupils’ work is correctly levelled: this could be achieved by developing the portfolio into a more consistent and useful file of evidence.

Book scrutiny established that coverage of the scheme of work is good. There was evidence of some thoughtful work being done by pupils in response to some imaginative questioning by teachers. Pupils had written some sensitive prayers in different year groups which showed how their spirituality had progressed. Other faiths have been taught in the relevant year groups. Teacher comments were not always helpful and in some books there were too many worksheets used.

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

The headteacher is a deeply Christian man who cares about the school and for the well-being of its pupils.

Parents spoke positively about the work of the deputy headteacher.

The RE Coordinator has ensured that the RE curriculum is in line with other core subjects in the school and that the pupils experience a variety of styles of leadership in CW.

The teaching staff and LSAs are committed, caring, enthusiastic, good teachers and are key to the well-being of the pupils.

The appointment of the new rector and curate has strengthened the school’s Christian ethos. The rector has been appointed as the new Chair of the Governing Body, which is ready to participate strongly in supporting and challenging the school leadership team. The Chair and Governing Body are committed to supporting the areas for development which will be highlighted by this Section 50 and the Estyn inspection reports.

Overall, an element of inspirational leadership required in a CiW school seems to be missing at present. There appears to be insufficient direction and strategies for improvement in place. The School Development Plan should include priorities regarding the Christian aspect of the school, as a unified document. Writing of the Section 50 Self-Evaluation Report should involve all staff. Communication needs improvement: for example, some parents felt they were not kept informed about plans to lift the school out of its Amber status. Attendance targets and their communication to parents need to be put in place. Expectations should be aspirational and pupil achievement should be higher than it is. Whilst a Christian ethos is well embedded in the school with many positive aspects, there is much more that could make the school special for all pupils.

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