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THE CHURCH
IN WALES

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Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

Model Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School

College Road,
Carmarthen
SA31 3EQ

Diocese: St David's
Local authority: Carmarthenshire LEA
Dates of inspection: 20, 23-25 June 2014
Date of last inspection: June 2008
School's unique reference number: 669/3322
Headteacher: Mrs A Bowen-Price
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Dilys Williams, NS Registration Number 511.

School context

The Model Church in Wales Primary School, situated in the market town of Carmarthen, serves the parishes of St David's and St Teilo's. There are 495 pupils on roll, of which 43 have English as an additional language, 32% are on the SEN register, 14 are statemented and 18% have free school meals. The school retains close links with the nearby University Trinity St David.

A number of staff and SMT changes have occurred recently through departures, secondments and maternity leave; the new headteacher was appointed in January 2013.

The school has a two-form entry with 17 classes overall.

Established strengths

The strengths of the school are:

- its inclusive ethos which is tailored to the needs of individual pupils
- pupils' high standard of behaviour
- the strong Christian leadership of the headteacher
- its highly motivated team of teachers
- the quality of its collective worship
- its close links with the parish priest
- the support from its governing body

Focus for development

The school should:

- turn the Church in Wales Religious Education (RE) syllabus into bespoke schemes of work to suit the varying needs of the pupils and to support the classroom teachers
- develop a whole-school RE overview of what should be taught in each year group to avoid repetition and to ensure progression
- put in place a consistent, rigorous system of assessment, monitoring, tracking and evaluation in RE
- involve pupils more consistently in monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship (CW) and RE
- choose a set of core Christian values to be central to the life of the school
- make better use of, and refresh regularly, classroom prayer areas
- review the roles of local clergy and the contribution they could make to CW and the Christian character of the school.

Prospects for Improvement

The judgements given for the four Key Questions are all GOOD. Whilst the prospects for improvement are good overall, there is significant work needed to ensure effective leadership and management of RE.

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

The Christian ethos of Model school is well embedded. The visual presence of Christian artefacts and colourful displays in and around the school portray its Christian character. Pupils are carefully nurtured and supported in a happy learning environment where a strong focus on Christian values and mutual respect ensures that behaviour is very good. The spiritual growth of the pupils would be enriched by the school community choosing a set of core Christian values which could become central to the life of the school. Classrooms have prayer areas but they could be used more widely to give pupils ownership of them as part of their spiritual development.

There is an atmosphere of love and trust in this large primary school which enables pupils to be confident in sharing their ideas and opinions about their faith and beliefs, and provides them with a sure foundation for the future. They are encouraged to think about others by raising money for various charities - local, national and international. They are taught to understand and respect the beliefs of others and are able to compare other religions with their own.

Staff are extremely caring and it is obvious that they all hold the best interests of the pupils' close to their hearts. They are committed to their role of giving all pupils the opportunity to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Their employment of a variety of enriching experiences reinforces the school's Christian ethos.

The school has very close links with the parish priest. He is caring and supportive both spiritually and pastorally. Pupils are happy talking to him and feel he is very much part of the school community. However, they would like to see him 'around the school even more'.

Parents are very pleased with the school; one parent commented 'we think this is a great school which has lovely, caring Christian values'. They also believe their children receive 'a good Christian education'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is GOOD.

Daily acts of worship are at the heart of the life of the school. They are distinctly Christian and seem to be a special time for both pupils' and staff. In four observations during the inspection, worship was a good mixture of traditional and contemporary. Pupils entered quietly and reverently to appropriate music. Prayers were said in both English and Welsh. The worship was well planned, often challenging and had a positive impact on pupils. They were led by the Headteacher, staff, pupils and the parish priest and were consistently good with many areas of excellence observed. Pupils were actively involved in worship, sang with enthusiasm and responded clearly and confidently. They enjoyed taking part in the worship and were lively and reflective at the appropriate moments in the celebrations. Two acts of worship led by classes were particularly good and demonstrated a high standard of work done by both teachers and pupils. Parents are encouraged to attend class-led worship and the inspector was impressed at the number of parents who came to support pupils in Year 5. Acts of worship provided opportunities to reflect on key messages and pupils responded to questions in a mature manner.

There was full involvement of staff in all worship activities which emphasises the importance the school places upon worship and the school's commitment to providing pupils with a range of good quality experiences.

The parish priest leads whole school worship once a week. Pupils respond positively to his visits and feel he helps them learn more about the Bible. At various times of the year the priest is involved in producing a variety of styles of worship in the school which have included an open air drama based on the crossing of the Red Sea and a special pets' service. Parents and pupils talked enthusiastically about these events. Pupils showed an openness to hearing the distinct Christian messages given by the priest both in school and when year groups attend the parish church. The school retains close links with the University Trinity St. David and the Trinity Chapel is occasionally used for worship.

Preparation for Confirmation takes place at school and pupils then take part in a school Eucharist. There are plans to make Eucharist a termly event.

The experience of collective worship would be enhanced by the involvement of a wider range of clergy and lay ministers and by developing a role for pupils in planning, delivering and evaluating its impact.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is GOOD.

The Church in Wales syllabus for RE is used throughout the school. Personal teacher planning is detailed and creative, demonstrating that staff have a sound subject knowledge. Individual lesson plans contain introductory activities, success criteria, a time for reflection and sometimes the use of differentiation. Pupils receive a range of different experiences in lessons through a variety of teaching styles and imaginative activities. In most cases classroom displays reflect what is being taught and are lively and colourful. Prayers written by pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 are included in classroom displays; they demonstrate how pupils' spirituality grows during their journey through school. Other world faiths are effectively covered and artefacts are borrowed from Trinity St. David to supplement teaching. Teachers are ably supported by a strong group of LSAs who are committed to encouraging all pupils to do their best. In the lessons seen by the inspector, teaching ranged from adequate to good with some very good aspects observed.

Pupils are happy to discuss their opinions from a very early age and listen carefully to and respect the views of their peers. There is evidence of the progress being made in most lessons and teacher-pupil relationships are good. Pupils are engaged, enjoy and are often challenged in their learning.

Classroom teachers keep detailed portfolios of evidence and they monitor progress. Marking in books follows the whole school marking policy and often contains comments to help pupils make progress; in some books evaluation of learning is very good. The class teachers work hard at finding the best materials to support learning.

Notwithstanding the complimentary assessment of this Key Question, the overall planning of the subject could be tightened up considerably. The Church in Wales RE syllabus has not been turned into a bespoke scheme of work written to suit the varying needs of the pupils and to support the classroom teachers at the school. There is no whole-school RE overview of what should be taught in each year group to avoid repetition and to ensure progression in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. There are no central resources to support staff. Some assessment, monitoring, tracking and evaluation takes place, but a more rigorous system must be put in place to ensure consistency of tracking of pupil progress from entry to exit.

So whilst the overall judgement is good, there are significant areas where performance is assessed as adequate.

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

The school is quickly moving forward under the leadership of the headteacher who has been in post since January 2013. She has a calm and consistent Christian approach and is working to ensure the leadership team succeed as they embed and the SMT becomes more stable. Staff increasingly feel supported by the headteacher and her senior management team and communication is growing at all levels.

All staff have a personal commitment to the Christian ethos of the school and to its aim to recognise the God given abilities of each child.

Parents feel they are welcome to come to school at any time, knowing that the headteacher will always try and speak to them immediately if possible. They are happy with the school and many parents chose Model school for their children over other local schools.

The governors strongly support the Christian vision for the school and are working closely with the headteacher to develop their role. They are actively involved in the school's evaluation process.

The school is completely inclusive of all pupils, regardless of need, and has very good strategies to support and nurture individual learners.

There are effective links between the church, the school and the local community. The parish priest, who is also chair of the governing body, is enthusiastic about forging greater links in the future.

The school is developing strong links with St John Lloyd RC Secondary School so that pupils can choose to continue their education in a church school. Parents are pleased with this new initiative.

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