

Section 50 Inspection of Church in Wales Schools

Charles Williams Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School

High Street
Caerleon
NP18 1AZ

Diocese: Monmouth

Local authority: Newport

Dates of inspection: 2nd December 2019

Date of last inspection: 12 to 15 October 2015

School's unique reference number: 6803313

Headteacher: Rebecca Penn

Inspector's name: Rebecca Morteo

School context

Charles Williams Church in Wales Primary School is situated in the heart of Caerleon in the northern outskirts of the city of Newport. The school was established in 1724 following a bequest made by its namesake, Charles Williams. The school continues to work closely with the Charles Williams Charitable Trust, with members of the Trust sitting on the governing body. Charles Williams is larger than average with classrooms occupying a number of separate buildings on site. There are some split classes across the school. Many of the children who attend the school live outside the local area. The number of children entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. Very few children speak English as an additional language. There are currently 56 children on the special needs register.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Charles Williams Church in Wales Primary School as a Church in Wales school are good

Gospel values provide a distinctively Christian approach to the school's policies and practices. Relationships between staff and children are positive and respectful. High expectations of behaviour ensure that all members of the school community show consideration towards each other. This is demonstrated by the emphasis placed on inclusion. Following a period of change within the leadership team, the school have begun to look at ways forward through a developing self-evaluation system.

Established strengths

- Children confidently and enthusiastically discuss faith and values.
- Christian values permeate through all areas of school life.
- School leaders have developed and maintained strong, effective links with the church community.

Focus for development

- Create greater opportunities for children's evaluation of worship to inform improvements.
- Provide opportunities in the religious education (RE) scheme of work to develop a greater depth of understanding of key aspects of Christianity and other faiths.
- Refine evaluation processes in order to develop a clearer understanding of impact of Christian distinctiveness and identify ways to move the school forward.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all children

The school's vision of 'Belong, Believe, Become', promotes a positive, inclusive environment where children respect each other. Both the headteacher and senior leaders place children at the heart of this vision and ensure that there is a strong focus on wellbeing. This is demonstrated through effective relationships across the school and in the confident way children articulate their views. Most members of the school community understand and can discuss the impact of the school vision. Children eagerly explain how the vision encourages them to believe in themselves and in their God in order to "become who you want to be". They also explain how this could relate to any faith or belief. Conversations around faith happen naturally across the school and within pupil groups. All members of the school community speak positively about Christian values and the support the school offers. The Christian character is clear in many areas of the school. For example, the foundation phase corridor which creatively displays a selection of the children's favourite hymns. Additionally, a large nativity scene at the front of the school, along with values-based reflection areas in classrooms further demonstrate a focus on Christianity. The junior hall displays the values of the year and a large liturgical wheel points to the church season. A child entering worship, politely reminded the headteacher to move the wheel as it was the start of a new season, demonstrating its effectiveness. The parents spoken to believed that the school's vision 'ensures everyone feels like they belong'. They also felt that the school nurtures their children and provides 'a fantastic foundation with values that we want them to have for the rest of their lives'. Children of faiths other than Christianity discussed how they were given opportunities to talk about their beliefs within their classrooms. They would like more opportunities to do this and the school have identified ways to develop this in the future. The school offer opportunities for spiritual development with a growing understanding of this across the school. There are additional extra-curricular opportunities for children to develop spirituality including a weekly Bible club and a monthly messy church. These are both run in partnership with the local church, are well attended and valued by the parents. During a time of change, the commitment of the leadership team to the school vision has ensured that Christian distinctiveness has maintained a high profile across the school community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is an important part of school life with most members of the school community able to discuss what it means to them. It is a special time in the school day with the use of candles, prayers and hymns giving it its distinct feel. Worship is the main way through which the school's Christian values are explored and therefore is central to the children's understanding of what makes them distinctively Christian. A clear structure for worship is in place with many members of staff leading worship across the school. Children lead some elements of worship, for example the opening and closing prayers. The introduction of the "iSingPop" project has been received positively by children, parents and the church. Children sing and join in enthusiastically to the songs and actions. Parents describe how their children come home singing songs and enjoy discussing how they make them feel. The church hosts concerts as part of the project and use the songs in services, where they are well received by the congregation. This project provides effective links between members of the school community. Worship is based on Christian values and the Christian calendar. Planning of worship is clear with leaders providing useful additional support and information for class-based worship. Children's involvement with planning, evaluating and improving worship is in the early stages of development. They offer their views and show some understanding of Christian traditions in worship but have limited opportunities to develop this further. The introduction of an enquiry-based approach to Key Stage Two (KS2) class-based worship is beginning to develop discussion around spirituality. In the worships observed, most learners, when given the opportunity, responded positively and participated eagerly. The local vicar leads worship regularly in school. The "Open the Book" team, which includes members of the church congregation, also visit regularly and this is received positively by all. These links further strengthen relationships between the school and church community. Children enjoy talking about prayer and describe the use of a prayer tree in the hall on which they can write anything that concerns them. The leaders of worship or the local vicar would then address these concerns through worship or prayer. Children felt this was a good way to express any worries or concerns. Understanding of how prayer can be used in their own lives is developing. They would like to see more opportunities for prayer around the school, particularly the use of outdoor areas.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children enjoy RE lessons and eagerly talk about their work. They speak enthusiastically about lessons linked to Christian values and how they impact on their everyday life. Moreover, they transfer learning around values into other areas of the curriculum. The overall quality of teaching observed was good using a wide range of strategies that ensured most children were engaged. The use of a box containing hidden items quickly engaged some of the youngest children in a discussion on light. One child, for example, spoke of the importance of “being shown the way in darkness by light”. Children are given many valuable opportunities across the school to share their views and opinions. Discussions with partners, in small groups and as a whole class are encouraged, developing children’s understanding and questioning skills. This approach is evident across the school but particularly in KS2 where small group discussion activities were a key part of the lesson and demonstrated how children listen to each other with respect. Standards of attainment in RE are in line with other core subjects. Leaders monitor and evaluate progress as part of the school evaluation cycle. There are developing procedures for assessment with a tracking system that allows senior leaders to monitor progress and standards. A standardisation portfolio is being developed to support teachers in the consistency of their assessment of RE. The current scheme of work is being developed to ensure that all learners are given opportunities to develop their knowledge of key aspects of Christianity in addition to other faiths and non-religious worldviews. This is an area that school leaders have identified for development. School evaluation systems for RE are evolving with a commitment from leaders to ensure its consistent application across the school. The RE leader is given opportunities to monitor and evaluate RE and to communicate this to senior leaders. The school engages with training opportunities offered by the diocese and ensures that they are kept up to date with current developments.

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

A clear commitment by the headteacher and senior leaders to develop Christian distinctiveness ensured that it remained a high priority during a period of change. The way in which leaders articulate the school vision provides a clear focus on Christian values and describes how these values impact on many areas of school life. The school community support the promotion of the vision and a values-based approach to learning and personal development. This includes the governors who take pride in the ethos of the school and ensure that they are a regular presence. Monitoring activities, such as listening to learners and looking at children’s books, inform action planning. The implementation of this is in the early stages of development with pupil voice beginning to contribute to improvement. Senior leaders are clear about how to take forward the self-evaluation process. Moreover, the RE leader has identified clear ways forward for the subject and is committed to developing key aspects of the curriculum in collaboration with the diocese. Opportunities to develop leadership skills are given with a clear dialogue between middle leaders and the senior leadership team. Leaders, including governors, engage well with the support offered by the diocese. Effective partnerships across the school community support the Christian distinctiveness further. Parents engage well with the school. They value the focus on positive relationships and support the Christian values and ethos. Links between the church and school provides additional opportunities to develop these successful partnerships. Events such as the Year 5 Taizé service are well supported by parents and valued by children who identify them as a highlight of their school experience. Strong relationships with the church further support Christian distinctiveness for example a recent RE lesson which used the church to explain the meaning of baptism. Projects such as the reverse advent calendar for the local food bank offer additional opportunities for children to develop an understanding of local community initiatives. Senior leaders value these partnerships and recognise them as an intrinsic part of developing their distinctive Christian ethos.

The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship

YES

The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education (where inspected)

YES