



## Gwella Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

### **Charles Williams Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School**

High Street  
Caerleon  
Newport NP18 1AZ

#### **Diocese:**

Local authority:	Newport Local Education Authority
Dates of inspection:	12 to 15 October 2015
Date of last inspections:	Infants: 23 to 25 March 2009 Juniors: 22 & 29 June 2012
School's unique reference number:	06282
Head teacher:	Mr Jared Nolan
Inspector's name:	Mrs Susan Jordan

#### **School context**

Charles Williams Church in Wales VA Primary School was opened in April 2014 and is located in the centre of the historic Roman town of Caerleon. The first 'Williams' school was founded in 1724, as funded by an endowment from Charles Williams Esquire. The school was created through the amalgamation of the large Infant and Junior Caerleon Endowed Schools on the current extensive site.

There are currently 545 pupils, aged 3 to 11 years, on the school roll with a 512 full time equivalent in 19 classes; two classes have mixed year groups. The number on roll has risen particularly since the amalgamation with an increasing number being taken from outside the catchment area. Around 3% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and the school has identified 13% of pupils as having additional learning needs. Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs and currently there is one looked after child in the school. 12% pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and for 3% pupils, English is a second language. English is the main language of communication in the school and Welsh is taught as a second language.

#### **Established strengths**

The strengths of the school are:

- the distinct Christian Values that underpin Religious Education and Collective Worship that are explored and expressed across many areas of school life
- the close and mutually supportive links that have been formed between the church and the school
- the excellent attitude of pupils, firmly based on their understanding of Christian values
- the caring and respectful relationships between staff and pupils

**Focus for development**

The school has four areas in which to focus development:

- include greater challenge and differentiation in Religious Education, with a particular focus on more able pupils
- develop whole school monitoring, tracking, assessment and evaluation of Religious Education
- extend opportunities for pupil participation in the planning, delivering and evaluation of worship to develop pupil leadership skills
- further develop learners' understanding of and respect for diverse faiths and cultures

**Prospects for improvement**

The judgements given for all four Key Questions are GOOD. The school has good prospects for making all four grades excellent.

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

At Charles Williams all pupils are valued and nurtured in a clearly distinctive Christian atmosphere. From the main entrance and throughout the school, interactive focus areas communicate the fact that Christian values are the cornerstone of everything that goes on in the school day. Particularly impressive is the Values mosaic designed and created by children and a local artist. The school's motto 'Seek the light', vision, core principles and aims all reflect this. The prospectus and website also clearly demonstrate the Christian character of the school. Under the focused Christian leadership of the headteacher, supported by a committed staff team and active Governors, there has been a successful amalgamation of the two schools. The new school has made good progress in a comparatively short time. It is clear that teaching and support staff are dedicated to raising the achievement of pupils in their care; consequently pupils make good progress against their personal targets based on national and school data.

Standards in Religious Education (RE) are good and pupils achieve well. The inspector's discussions with the Estyn team established that standards are in line with other subject areas and in particular literacy with some challenging opportunities for extended writing.

The school's ethos is further evident throughout the school in Christian displays in classrooms, both halls and in corridors. The children talk proudly about their class's reflection areas with pebbles or shells being used to reinforce the core Christian value focus for the half term. Within this Christian setting it is clear that the pupils are happy and contented learners supported by a team of dedicated and spiritual staff. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which engage and stimulate the pupils' enjoyment of learning. The very successful and popular 'Bible Club' for pupils is run by two members of staff. As one member of staff said they are 'sowing the seeds for the children's journey into faith in a very positive way'. A parent describes this club as a 'the school out in the community'. Pupils are extremely respectful, polite and well mannered with a strong commitment to caring for others. They are encouraged to be involved in raising money for charities both locally and nationally and are sensitive to the needs of others.

Christian values are becoming embedded in the daily life of the school and reinforce the high expectations set by the headteacher and his staff. Parents speak highly of the way the school promotes its use of Christian values. A parent commented that 'the school promotes Christian values as well as retaining its distinctive character which contributes to pupils' education and spiritual guidance'. The very good relationships between all members of the school community underpin the Christian character of the school. The high number of responses to the parental questionnaire was commendable.

Links with the parish church and the community are strong. A parent observed that 'links to the church give the school a strong sense of identity, right and wrong and community pride to our children'. The local priest stated that he feels that 'church and school are coming closer together ... striving to be one'. 'Messy Church' is now held in the school and the Palm Sunday parade takes place in the town.

## **KQ2. The impact of collective worship on the school community is GOOD**

Daily collective worship (CW) is central to the life of the school and has a positive impact on the pupils. CW is linked to the value for each half term and takes place in each phase on four days of the week with class-based worship taking place on the fifth day. The school building is too small for whole school worship, consequently worship is held in St Cadoc's Church on a half-termly basis and also for special festivals. Pupils are confident about attending church and their familiarity with the customs and practices of the Church in Wales demonstrates a well-developed sense of spirituality. The recently appointed priest has maintained and extended the good relationships already in place, he is proactive in his support of the ongoing development of RE and CW. This includes some lively 'jazzy' singing and regular visits to the Church.

There is careful planning of CW around the Church calendar, using 'Values for Life' and 'Roots from Fruits' materials. To ensure the Christian aspects of CW continue to improve and inspire pupils, acts of worship focus on the chosen value for the half term and follow a common structure. This is helping to develop consistency in the quality of worship and ensures that there is both variety and continuity in themes rooted in Christian beliefs. Planning files are kept which are detailed and contain all resources needed for consistent delivery of worship. Some pupil evaluation of worship has taken place, however the setting up a more rigorous evaluation system would lead to an even more exciting and challenging worship in future.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about the school prayer (chosen by the Values Group) which is said in all worship sessions. A prayer station has been set up in the Key Stage Two hall and personal prayers are now read at the end of acts of worship and taken to Morning Prayer in the church. This, together with the various prayer / reflection areas in each class, demonstrates the importance that the school attaches to prayer.

The Head teacher and Senior leaders firmly believe that worship is at the heart of the school and are keen to emphasise that all members of the school community place great value on collective worship.

The attitude of pupils to worship is good and there is always a time of personal reflection, allowing everyone to contemplate in their own way, pupils are quiet and thoughtful at these moments. Pupils are developing a deep understanding of the Christian faith and can talk about their beliefs in a mature way. They appreciate the rich variety of worship offered in the school and know this is helping to develop their spirituality.

The inspector observed three acts of worship, two in Foundation Phase and one in Key Stage Two: all were good. Pupils entered quietly to background music and were respectful and attentive. They enjoy preparing the hall for worship and organising the music. Both altars are dressed in the liturgical colours for the church's season but a more central position for the altar in Key Stage Two would be beneficial. Younger pupils were engrossed and actively involved in the story telling of Noah and the Ark, the use of exciting visual aids added to pupils' enjoyment. Older pupils contributed their own prayers to their worship session which were both sensitive and reverent. 'Open the book' drama group from Caerleon Churches Together regularly lead worship. They engage and involve pupils in dramatic story telling.

Pupil voice is developing as pupils feel their opinions are being listened to and acted upon as shown by worship evaluations from the recently formed Values Group. Pupils enjoy taking more responsibility and are proud of their school. However, in order to increase pupils' impact on CW more involvement in planning, participation & evaluation is needed.

### **KQ3. The effectiveness of the religious education is GOOD**

Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and understand the value of the subject and its links to the values and distinctive character of the school. Parents receive an overview of the curriculum at the beginning of each term; it includes what each class will be doing in every area including RE. Parents speak positively about receiving this information.

A scrutiny of books plus discussions with pupils indicates that pupils enjoy a wide and varied RE curriculum. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of many of the key aspects of Christianity and the Bible and many articulate this in a mature way. A wonderful example of linking the Bible to current news was observed comparing the characteristics of Jesus to a rugby player. Pupils' knowledge of other faiths is limited. In securing a sense of belonging beyond the Church in Wales, the school aims to further links with other faith communities to promote understanding of and respect for their beliefs. However, this is at an early stage of development and further links are being formed with a multi-cultural school in Newport. A variety of teaching and learning styles are used to stimulate and inspire the pupils. The use of differentiated tasks often ensures that pupils are challenged and motivated, this is increasingly having an impact on pupils' learning. However, appropriate differentiation for all abilities is inconsistent across the school and evidence in books is mostly based on outcome. Marking is detailed, with effective comments to ensure progression, although next steps are not always identified.

Teaching is good with aspects of some very good practice in certain lessons. In the 5 part-lessons observed (two sessions in Foundation Phase and three in Key Stage 2) many pupils communicate with confidence and respond effectively to some probing questions on aspects of the Bible and religious ideas. Teachers demonstrate good questioning skills and there are opportunities for pupils to develop further high literacy skills with older pupils showing empathy and understanding. In Key Stage Two most pupils engage well with tasks, work cooperatively in groups, at an appropriate pace and demonstrate progress in their learning. In the Foundation Phase nearly all pupils enjoy RE and the variety of activities captures their interest well. Older pupils demonstrate independent research skills using ICT. Their presentations are of a high standard with evidence of self-challenge. Assessment for Learning strategies were observed in some classes, but this is inconsistent across the school. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and the active involvement of Teaching Assistants enhances pupils' learning in a positive way.

The RE curriculum is well planned. The newly-adopted Diocesan Scheme of work links to the half-termly value where appropriate and includes some good use of RE core skills across the curriculum. Core skills match the expectations of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) and members of staff currently use this for tracking pupils' progress with the aid of a newly created levelled portfolio. Recommendations from the last Junior School Section 50 report included implementing tracking and monitoring of this curriculum area. However, there is still no formal electronic tracking system for RE but it should be in place by the end of the Autumn Term 2015.

The RE coordinator is well informed in current developments in RE. She is actively developing links with a neighbouring multi-faith school. Her enthusiasm and determination to improve RE is reflected in her aim to make it one of the best curriculum areas in the school.

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

The continuing development of a whole school Christian ethos and vision has been an important part of the school's growth since the amalgamation in April 2014. This vision links strongly to the school's Christian values that underpin all aspects of school life. The headteacher, RE coordinator and the local priest (Chair and RE link Governor) readily articulate the impact of explicit Christian values on the lives of learners and on the whole life of the school. They meet regularly to ensure that all Christian aspects of school life benefit all pupils. The local priest also works with the School Ambassadors on the Pupil Action Plan for RE as well as developing CW with Senior leaders and pupils.

The headteacher's personal Christian values are beginning to have a strong influence on Charles Williams Primary School, supported by an increasingly effective Governing Body, a robust Senior leadership team and a dedicated staff. All are committed in their pursuit of excellence in the school and they have a good understanding of the school's performance and distinctiveness based on the school's self-evaluation strategies. The school's self-evaluation process leads directly to the school's improvement planning and has a strong Christian impact on all members of the school community.

The Governing Body, has undergone a number of changes in the last twelve months, including the arrival of a new priest six months ago. His dynamic approach has led quickly to his appointment as Chair of Governors. Governors enthusiastically articulate the impact the explicitly Christian values of the school have on pupils, parents and members of the community. Governors have a clear understanding of their role with links to each class, observing and monitoring standards and they are becoming fully informed about what goes on in the school. They support and challenge school leaders, seeing themselves very much as 'critical friends'. Governors assess the school's progress, expecting value for money. The school has recently adopted a joint vision statement of organisational culture (DNA) with the church community at St Cadoc's of 'Belong, Believe and Become' and this is an effective partnership between the local priest, governors and the school. Foundation Governors therefore support the church/school link and ensure that the strategic leadership of the school has a Christian focus.

The school has strong links with the Diocese ensuring staff attend training courses as well as working effectively with other church schools as part of a Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focusing on church school distinctiveness and a new whole school Scheme of Work. This demonstrates that the headteacher sees the professional development of staff as a high priority.

Parental links are developing well and they appear very supportive of the work of the school. They like the 'open door' policy and many speak warmly of the school and what it does for them and their children. One parent said, 'the strong Christian values enhance the education' that their child receives. They value the Faith aspect of the school with 'Christian teaching and Bible believing ethics'.

<b>The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education (where inspected)</b>	<b>YES</b>

The inspector would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils for the opportunity to be part of the life of the school, and to thank them for their consideration and co-operation during the inspection.