

Bloxwich Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Street
Bloxwich
Walsall
WS3 3LP

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Walsall
Dates of inspection: 20th October 2011
Date of last inspection: 2nd April 2009
School's unique reference number: 104221
Headteacher: Mr Martyn Blunt
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Rosemary Woodward 583

School context

This urban school stands in the centre of Bloxwich, a suburb of Walsall. Almost all pupils live in the immediate locality. There are one and a half classes in each year group and so the school runs a two year curriculum rolling programme. The majority of pupils are from a white-British heritage, but the school community includes representatives from a diversity of other cultures. The school buildings are mainly Victorian with some modern additions. Outside space is very restricted.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bloxwich CE (VC) Primary School as a Church of England school are good

This distinctive and caring Christian school is built upon a clearly articulated framework of Christian values. Pupils know that they are part of a Christian family in which their spiritual and moral development is of high importance and every child really does matter. School and church work together to embed worship and Biblical teaching at the heart of school community life.

Established strengths

- The excellent partnership between the school and the parish church
- Caring and nurture that makes every child in the school feel special, valued and included.
- The explicitly Christian values that underpin the life of the school
- The spiritual awareness of pupils cultivated through a range of worship experiences and a strong underlying grounding in the words of the Bible

Focus for development

- To establish systems which actively and formally engage foundation governors and Christian leaders in planning, monitoring and evaluating all aspects of worship and spiritual development in this church school.
- To develop and extend pupils' involvement in planning and leading worship and reflective opportunities, encouraging them to take greater responsibility and initiative, and so becoming more actively involved in their own spiritual journeys.

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

Christian values underpin the life of this safe and happy school, which provides an outstanding level of care, support and guidance for all its learners. The personal development of each pupil is nurtured as part of the school family in which Christian love, care, kindness and understanding underpin daily life. The school values individuals, very well ensuring that every child really does matter, and is enabled to strive to reach their full potential. As a result academic standards within the school are rising. The use of 'wise Solomon' mentors allows older children to support younger ones well and provides a practical illustration of the Biblical values embedded within school life. Pupils see the Christian character of the school as being an intrinsic part of its life, and can make clear links between the school's Christian values and teaching. One said that *'The best thing about the school is that it teaches us to pray to God, and we can go to Him for help.'* Pupils can discuss how the core school values of 'honesty,

truth, courage' on their badge are '*worn over our heart because they are at the centre of school life*'. Those of other faiths and cultures speak highly of their school, and play a full part within it. Reflective areas in classrooms provide a focus for the spiritual development of the pupils, although pupils could be encouraged to engage more fully in the process of making these areas more interactive.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils speak very positively about worship within the school, and most enjoy singing and opportunities to volunteer and participate. They particularly enjoy singing the school hymn, which celebrates the school's values. The role of the church/school family worker is particularly appreciated, especially his use of puppets, which have helped younger pupils to understand that '*God goes on loving us because we are His sheep*'. The important place of the church in the life of the school was clearly demonstrated through the observed reception class worship in church, to which parents were welcomed. The good use of the story of Zaccheus to show that '*no-one is too little for Jesus*' care was highly relevant for the group. It also provided a good opportunity for church and school to make contact with and involve new parents. Class and key stage worship allow good opportunities for pupil involvement in writing and sharing prayers - a developmental point from the previous inspection. Pupils are encouraged to memorise relevant Bible verses, and many do so very effectively. They also share '*the Peace*' together with confidence and some know the words of the 'Lord's Prayer'. Major church festivals are celebrated, with good understanding by most pupils of the importance of Easter for Christians, although the link between the festival and the Eucharist has not yet been explored. Many members of school and church staff are involved in leading worship. A combined strategy for planning and developing weekly themes across the various school celebrations would further enhance worship and allow pupils to further explore its relevance to their own lives. A robust system of evaluation, involving pupils, staff and governors, is the next step to ensure that all work together to enrich the very good worship and involve pupils more widely. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in church life through school involvement with Sunday activities and through the choir.

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

The headteacher is a strong Christian leader, who is passionately committed to the Christian ethos and growth of this distinctive church school. He has a clear vision for moving the school forward, which he shares with the governors and staff. The foundation governors, RE co-ordinator and church team, particularly the Rector, work extremely closely with the headteacher to help him to turn this vision into practice. The strong, effective relationships which exist between the church and school, and their concern to reach out to the local community are particular strengths. However, there are opportunities to enrich these further by involving the governors, particularly foundation governors, in developing the distinctive place of RE and worship within the school and in listening to the voice of the learners in order to evaluate and develop worship even further. All members of staff are valued for their vital role in the life of the school, and encouraged to move forward professionally. All work diligently to ensure that pupils have the chance to achieve their best, offering care and guidance in ways that are rooted in Christian values. They are also given good spiritual support, illustrated by the recent baptism of one member of staff. School documentation celebrates the school's distinctive Christian character very well, although there is scope for embedding this across the whole curriculum rather than as a distinct area of school life. Church and school have combined to employ a family worker who is valued highly by the whole community. The use of school buildings for lunchtime clubs for pupils, mothers and toddler group and drop-in sessions for parents provide further excellent opportunities for the church to live out the Gospel within the school and local community. Work with the local and wider communities, which builds on teaching within the school, ensures that most pupils show understanding and respect for others, including those from different cultures, and develop an understanding of the diverse world in which they live. The school is well supported by the diocese through the service level agreement. Older learners take part in the 'Open Door' event at Lichfield Cathedral, so encouraging them to see themselves as part of the wider Church family. There are opportunities to enrich the experience of all pupils through increased exploration of the worldwide church and Anglican communion. The development of school partnerships with contrasting areas nationally and globally is an effective strategy to accomplish this.