



## Gwella Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

### St. Ethelwold's Voluntary Aided Primary School

Melrose Avenue, Shotton, Deeside, CH5 1NG

Diocese: St. Asaph

Local authority: Flint

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Date of last inspection: February 2012

School's unique reference number: 6643330

Headteacher: Paul Oliver

Inspector's name and number: Kathryn Thomas



### School context

St Ethelwold's Primary School is in Deeside, Flintshire. Currently, there are 104 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 11 years, including 15 nursery age pupils who attend part-time. There are four mixed-aged classes at the school.

About 30% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 18%.

The school identifies around 28% of pupils as having additional learning needs which is also above the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

A very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. Around 10% of pupils have English as an additional language. The headteacher took up his post in September 2008. Currently no child has been exempted from Religious Education or Collective Worship.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Ethelwold's as a Church in Wales school are GOOD

St. Ethelwold's Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School is a caring and inclusive Christian environment. The school's core Christian values of compassion, forgiveness, faith, peace, courage, generosity and truth have a strong influence on the daily lives of those within the school community. Members of staff know the children well and work tirelessly to ensure all succeed, providing extra support to nurture and engage vulnerable children and their families. The contribution of the local vicar and church community to the work of the school speaks of an effective partnership of service to the community.

The school encourages and develops the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of all pupils across all areas of the curriculum as well as through Religious Education. The school's values and reflection areas around the school, provide good opportunities for children to express their thoughts and deepen their own spirituality. An excellent example being the annual pilgrimage to Bardsey Island by year 6 where pupils, observing the sun setting, come to realise a sense of peace and an understanding of the awe and wonder of God's creation. Pupils are developing a growing understanding of and respect for other faith communities.

### **Established strengths**

- Relationships within the school community are embedded in the school's caring and inclusive Christian ethos and the good standard of behaviour in the school reflects the school's Christian values well
- The pupils' understanding of the school's values and how they impact on their daily lives
- The way the pupils of St Ethelwold's are supported by all adults to secure their full potential
- Collective worship makes a valuable contribution to the children's growing awareness of spirituality and how Christian values help them to lead better lives
- The high standard of RE teaching in upper key stage 2 which has resulted in pupils using and developing good quality thinking skills in RE

### **Focus for development**

- For leaders to ensure there is a sharper focus on pupil outcomes following monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, in establishing the effectiveness of collective worship and improved pupil outcomes in RE.
- To further develop an effective system for canvassing the views of pupils
- For pupils to regularly plan, organise and lead whole school collective worship
- For the headteacher to update the governing body termly on RE and collective worship

### **The prospects for improvement in the future are GOOD**

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

The school's Christian values are clearly expressed and articulated by many in the school community. The school believes that these values, together with RE teaching foster in pupils, spiritual development and life-long qualities such as resilience, spirit and strength. The values are lived out on a daily basis by both learners and staff and have a positive effect on pupils' performance, behaviour and relationships, enabling them to develop into rounded individuals. Learners behave well and relationships between all members of the school community are underpinned by the inclusive Christian ethos. For example, in all classes, pupils invite others to be a part of their group and make sure that no-one works on their own unless they really want to.

Most pupils across the school display a positive approach to learning. Early identification, intervention and liaison with specialist agencies ensure that pupils reach expected levels of progress, including those who are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils with additional needs achieve their individual targets. Despite the considerable efforts of the school to improve pupils' attendance, for the last three years the school has been placed in the bottom 25% when compared with similar schools.

Pupils' wellbeing has a high priority. On occasions where behaviour, attendance or family circumstances get in the way of learning, the school has developed compassionate systems to help bring about constructive resolutions. For example, the family support officer works with parents to try to improve their child's attendance. This is a clear expression of the school's deeply embedded Christian ethos and mission to those whom it serves.

The School has established worthwhile relationships with agencies involved in the provision of services for children and young people such as CAHMS, ACE, Children's Services and North Wales Police. This has had a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and their progress in learning. In Class 4 pupils can share any concerns with their class teacher through an on-line system which has proved such a success that it is being developed in other classes. A group of older pupils who worked towards the Prince William Award speak about how the sessions helped them to develop their team working and leadership skills as well as their resilience and self-confidence.

The spiritual development of pupils is being effectively fostered and there are many opportunities for pupils to experience moments of reflection during the school day. This contributes to their ability to express their thoughts confidently and clearly. For example, reception pupils talk about why it is important to say thank you to God for the fruits and vegetables at their harvest service. Most pupils display positive attitudes towards and enjoyment of learning. The annual pilgrimage to Bardsey Island

by year 6 pupils has had a profound effect on their spiritual development and provides an excellent opportunity for them to appreciate the awe and wonder of God's creation.

Pupils are developing an awareness of the diversity of faith and culture through meeting visitors to their school and through their RE work. For example, pupils build a Sukkah in the forest area to learn about the Jewish festival of Sukkot. Older pupils are developing a good awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith and talk about the similarities and differences between Christianity and other religions. The international days which pupils enjoy as a part of their curriculum enable them to be aware of difference and diversity and ensure that they are developing a clear understanding of and respect for other faith communities. Most learners have a good understanding of aspects of the Christian heritage of Wales. Pupils have a good understanding of the church at local level, due to the close links that exist with St. Ethelwold's Church. The church is used as a place for special services and festivals and also as an educational resource for teaching aspects of RE. For example, pupils enjoy learning about St. Ethelwold and celebrate his feast day with a service in St. Ethelwold's Church. There is a well-established school council which says that the school is a happy joyful place where pupils can learn responsibly and sensibly and support Christianity.

Religious education is well managed. It makes a positive contribution to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the Christian character and values of the school. The children engage well with the learning activities in RE and articulate their learning and beliefs in age appropriate ways. Many activities are suitably challenging, such as in the exploration of the question, 'Harvest. What's all the fuss about?' in Class 4 and they encourage pupils to think deeply as well as to consider the views of others.

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

Collective worship is central to the daily life of the school. It is effective in promoting the school's Christian ethos and brings everyone together as a church school family. Pupils talk positively about worship as an important aspect of what it means for them to be a church school and value the daily opportunities to meet together. The worship is inclusive and no families of other faiths elect not to attend.

All teaching staff lead worship and this gives variety which the pupils appreciate. Time is also allocated in collective worship to share and celebrate individual talent and achievement. Good quality planning of collective worship provides a structure that allows learners to encounter Christian beliefs. The collective worship coordinator is responsible for termly plans. She ensures there is continuity and variety and a very clear focus on Christian values, beliefs and festivals and on significant moments in the life of the school and the seasons of the church.

It is clear that the children enjoy listening, and taking part in collective worship. Pupils are able to talk about bible stories and make links with their own lives and the school's Christian values. For example, after listening to the story of the unforgiving servant, a pupil in year 2 spoke about how the school value of generosity is important in school because she would like her friends to be generous to her. As a result, worship creates a good learning environment through its moral messages which influence pupils' actions, attitudes and behaviour. Although monitoring and evaluation is now carried out on a regular basis as yet there is no systematic process for capturing and responding to the effectiveness of worship by all members of the school community which limits the progress which can be made.

Wherever appropriate, acts of collective worship are interactive. The singing is full and joyous and supports the Christian ethos very well. Opportunities to share written prayers in collective worship help children articulate how prayer can be used in their own lives to say sorry, thank you or, through 'Rocket Prayers', to ask for something for someone else. Although pupils participate willingly at various degrees for example, through reading prayers or rewarding good singing, there are too few opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship themselves. Pupils think 'it would be fun to plan and lead worship.' Pupils value prayer and make use of the reflective areas in and around the school. They write their own prayers for worship and festivals in the church for example, for the harvest service.

There are very good links with the local vicar whose weekly visits to school reinforce the Anglican tradition and support the Church school ethos very effectively. Pupils are familiar with Anglican

responses which start and conclude the worship. Many pupils have an age appropriate understanding of the key Christian beliefs such as that of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and can explain their thoughts. One pupil in year 5 said that 'God is three people. He is our father who is just always there, Jesus is his son who came down to earth and died for us and the Holy Spirit who protects us and this is what the Trinity is.

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

Standards in RE are generally good throughout the school and learners make good progress from their starting points. Those with additional needs achieve their individual learning targets. The majority of teaching is good, with some examples of innovative and excellent practice which thoroughly engages the pupils. Pupils are generally engaged by stimulating and creative activities which have been thoughtfully prepared. Pupils enjoy using and experimenting with a wide variety of resources in RE lessons which encourage creativity in music, art and IT as well as in prose, poetry and written work. Pupils in Class 4 are extremely confident and competent when composing music on an electronic tablet to accompany a harvest poem they are writing. Teacher-pupil relationships are very good and consequently pupils' behaviour is good.

Alongside the Diocesan scheme of work teachers are using 'Big Questions' very effectively to stimulate children's thinking and their ability to analyse and evaluate. Discussion, questioning and debate is very well developed through RE. Pupils enjoy RE and respond very positively and with interest and enthusiasm. They communicate with each other and their teachers well and make some mature and thoughtful responses in all year groups. In Class 3, pupils are encouraged to reflect on the creation story before planning their own artwork which they obviously enjoy and are happy to talk about. Pupils develop different skills such as enquiry, interpretation and reflection. Their ability to work together independently and purposefully and use these skills to solve problems is developing very well. This is particularly true in upper key stage 2 where pupils show a high level of independence and maturity in their thinking and working.

RE is given the same value and respect as other core subjects such as literacy. The balance between the majority of teaching which focuses on Christianity and that which addresses other world faiths such as Judaism and Islam is appropriate. Pupils' knowledge of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is developing through the annual international week, charity links and visits to school from people of other faith backgrounds such as members of the Russian Orthodox Church.

RE makes a very good contribution to the Christian values of the school and the learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are developing an increasing understanding of the relevance of RE to their own lives and the lives of others. This is due to the well-planned links the RE curriculum makes to the school's Christian values.

The subject coordinator is enthusiastic and supportive. A useful portfolio of assessed pupil work enables staff to have a sound awareness of levels and addresses a recommendation from the previous inspection fully. Monitoring and evaluation take place regularly but there needs to be sharper focus on what happens as a result of this for example, that it leads to improved pupil outcomes. There is a good variety of resources which support the teaching of RE well. The school has obtained grant funding to purchase resources such as bibles and to furnish the Reflection Area. This focus for development from the previous inspection has therefore been addressed.

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

School leaders articulate and promote a vision and Christian values which have a positive impact on the school community. Governors appreciate the way the school's Christian values and spirituality make a difference to the school's approach to relationships and behaviour. They say that behaviour has improved due to the focus on these values and any issues between pupils are resolved in a respectful way with pupils showing tolerance and generosity towards each other. The Governing Body has a very clear understanding of the purpose of a Church in Wales School. Governors contribute well to the life of the school and are fully committed to working as part of the school team. Parents also comment that the school's values are promoted throughout the school.

Self-evaluation by school leaders about how to continue to develop the school as a church school is at an early stage. Governors on the vision and values sub-committee are working with the school's leadership team on thinking governance. To this end they are reviewing school's current vision, 'Be the best you can be', to better encompass one which has a Christian message at its heart and make it even more relevant for its voluntary aided status. The school carries out regular monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and RE. However, given a sharper focus it could lead to further improvements.

A deeply caring community exists at all levels. The school acts swiftly and goes the 'extra mile' to support vulnerable pupils. The appointment of an effective family support worker has been instrumental in ensuring that all families feel valued and cared for by members of the school community. She has built a high level of trust with parents and is often the first point of contact when they need help, support, advice or just a reassuring chat. The school fosters strong links with home and school through family learning programmes, which are well attended and promote confidence, teamwork and a sense of belonging to the community of St Ethelwold's.

Links with the local church, St. Ethelwold's, are well established and very strong. The vicar makes an extremely valuable contribution to the life of the school through his commitment and support not only through worship and RE lessons but in his pastoral role for staff and pupils. Members of support staff feel that their views are valued and their opinions are taken in account. Pupils attend church for key events in the church calendar, school plays and also as a resource to support RE lessons. Events in church are supported well by parents and the local community and this ensures a 'community spirit' between the school, the church and the local community.

The school has benefitted from a range of professional development opportunities provided by the Diocese which is helping to support leaders in the continuing development as a church school. RE and collective worship is led with enthusiasm and there is a genuine desire to find ways to improve. Professional development training of staff and governors ensures that they are becoming more able to support the teaching and assessment of RE. All teachers have received training, for example, in developing the school's Christian ethos, thinking skills in RE and in using Big Questions in RE. This focus for development from the previous inspection has therefore been addressed.

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

*The content of this report should be considered alongside the Estyn team's Section 28 report. We would like to thank the Estyn inspection team for their co-operation. We would also like to thank the Headteacher, Staff, Governors and pupils of St. Ethelwold's School for their welcome and cooperation.  
Mrs Kath Thomas B.A. and Mr Gareth Williams M.Ed.*

## Parents' Questionnaire - Holiadur Rhieni

There were 9 responses - Yr oedd 9 ymateb

	YES / YDWYF	NO / NAC YDWYF	
Are you aware that this is a church school?	9		<i>A ydych yn ymwybodol mai Ysgol Eglwys yw hon?</i>
Do you believe that the school is a place which is built upon clear Christian values?	9		<i>A ydych o'r farn fod yr ysgol yn sefydliad sydd wedi ei adeiladu ar sylfaen Gristionogol glir?</i>
This is a Church School, that is a school with a Christian character. Was this fact important when you were choosing a school for your child/children?	3	6	<i>Ysgol Eglwys, sef ysgol gyda chymeriad Cristionogol, yw hon. A oedd y ffaith yma yn bwysig wrth i chi ddewis ysgol i'ch plentyn/plant?</i>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
The school has a distinctive Christian character	5	2	2			<i>Mae cymeriad Cristnogol nodedig yn perthyn i'r ysgol</i>
The school's distinctive Christian character makes a significant contribution to pupils' education	6		3			<i>Mae cymeriad Cristionogol nodedig yn gwneud cyfraniad awyddocaol i addysg y disgyblion.</i>
Pupils find collective worship a valuable experience	6		3			<i>Ym marn y disgyblion, mae'r addoli ar y cyd yn brofiad gwerthfawr</i>
The school has effective links with the local church and other faith communities	6	1	2			<i>Mae gan yr ysgol gysylltiadau effeithiol â'r eglwys leol a chymunedau ffydd eraill.</i>
The school keeps parents well informed about the work that pupils do in Religious Education	3	2	4			<i>Mae'r ysgol yn hysbysu'r rhieni yn dda am y gwaith a wna'r disgyblion mewn Addysg Grefyddol</i>
The school encourages pupils to care for God's Creation (the environment) as well as for themselves	6	2	1			<i>Mae'r ysgol yn hybu'r disgyblion i ofalu am Greadigaeth Duw (yr amgylchfed), yn ogystal â'n nhw eu hunain.</i>
The school encourages pupils to consider people in other countries, and how they can assist them, when help is required	5	2	2			<i>Mae'r ysgol yn hybu'r disgyblion i ystyried pobl mewn gwledydd eraill, a sut fedran nhw eu cynorthwyo pan bo angen.</i>
The school ensures links are made with the local community	8	1	0			<i>Mae gan yr ysgol gysylltiadau effeithiol â'r gymuned leol.</i>
	<i>Cytuno'n llwyr</i>	<i>Cytuno</i>	<i>Ynail na'r llall</i>	<i>Anghytuno</i>	<i>Anghytuno'n llwyr</i>	