Diocese of Llandaff

Report on the Inspection of a Church in Wales School under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005

Pen-y-Fai Church in Wales Primary School

Heol Eglwys, Pen-y-Fai, Bridgend CF31 4LX

School’s Unique Reference Number: 6723013
1. Characteristics of the school

Pen-y-Fai Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School is situated in the village of Pen-y-Fai on the outskirts of Bridgend. The main building, constructed in 1963, houses the hall and the reception classroom. All other classes are located in demountable units. Consultations regarding the building of a new school have been on-going for several years.

There are 152 pupils between the ages of four and eleven on roll taught in six classes, three of which contain a mixed age range. There are no children of nursery age, although provision for this age group is being discussed. There has been a decline in numbers since the last inspection, which has resulted in fewer teaching and support staff.

Most pupils come from homes in the village of Pen-y-Fai, although some travel from other areas of Bridgend, mainly because their parents have chosen a Church school education. The area is relatively prosperous and advantaged; only 3% are currently entitled to free school meals, which is well below the national and local averages. Around 13% are identified as having special educational needs, which is also below the national average. Around 5% are from an ethnic minority background. Almost all pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. Attendance for the last three terms was around 95% which is above the national average.

One family attends an Anglican church on Sundays and one child belongs to a Church in Wales Sunday School; three other families regularly attend a non-Anglican Church. One pupil is confirmed and two others take communion. No pupils are withdrawn from either collective worship or religious education. There is no Church-in-Wales secondary school in the vicinity to provide a continuity of Anglican education.

2. Summary

Four acts of collective worship and six religious education lessons, covering all classes, were observed.

The three Key Questions were judged as follows:

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Does the school have a distinctive Christian character and is this reflected in the experience of learners?</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>How does the school’s Christian character impact on the wellbeing of each pupil and the whole school community?</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>How well is the school led and managed as a Church school?</td>
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N.B. Estyn’s four point scale is used: Excellent, Good, Adequate and Unsatisfactory.

**Does the school fulfil its statutory requirements for collective worship, religious education, admissions and information for parents?**

Yes, although parents have not recently agreed formally to the Church in Wales syllabus being taught.
3. Remarks on the Key Questions

3.1 Does the school have a distinctive Christian character and is this reflected in the experience of learners?

3.1.1 How distinctive is the school’s Christian character?

The school has a very distinctive Christian character which underpins its life and work and which has a very positive impact on pupils’ all round development. Christian values are evident in the mission and vision statements and in displays and signs and symbols around the school, as well as through staff and pupil attitudes and the care they show for each other. There is an appropriate emphasis on prayer; pupils are encouraged to pray reflectively using their own written prayers and the Anglian liturgy.

3.1.2 What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

Acts of collective worship take a variety of forms based on a fortnightly cycle. They are a central focus of each school day and are carefully prepared. Sessions are reverent, joyful and uplifting, involving praise, prayer and enthusiastic pupil participation; the singing is a particular strength. There is an appropriate emphasis on Bible stories and the teaching of Jesus. Sessions in the hall involve a focal point and the lighting of a candle with a prayer to signal the beginning of the worship, although this process is not formally repeated at the end and more use could be made of such features in class based worship.

The fortnightly celebration of the Eucharist, led by the vicar, is an excellent aspect. It very effectively combines elements of the traditional Anglican communion service with language and procedures suitable for children of primary school age.

3.1.3 How does the school’s curriculum support its Christian character?

The religious education curriculum follows the Church in Wales syllabus, adapted for use by the school in line with its thematic and skills based approach. There is a comprehensive scheme of work and the time allocated to the subject is appropriate, involving topic work, focus weeks and discrete lessons and each week there is a Bible story linked to collective worship. Lesson planning is thorough with clear learning objectives.

Pupils achieve good standards in religious education and develop a secure knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity. They acquire a range of skills that enable them to explore religion and to express their own views. They make good use of information communications technology and different artefacts and texts, including the Bible. There is good coverage of the Welsh dimension, although in relation to the study of other world faiths there is a shortage of resources and a lack of visits to places of worship.

The quality of teaching ranges from adequate to excellent. Teachers use a variety of approaches that engage and maintain pupils’ interest and attention.
In the majority of lessons, although the same topic is studied, tasks generally are appropriately matched to pupils' ages and abilities, although differentiation is not always evident in the work produced.

Pupils' achievements in religious education are regularly assessed and recorded and there is appropriate reporting to parents in line with statutory requirements. Marking of work is thorough and comments help pupils move on to the next stage of their learning.

3.2 How does the school's Christian character impact on the wellbeing of each pupil and the whole school community?

3.2.1 How effective is the school in shaping spiritual and moral development?

The school effectively promotes spiritual and moral development. Appropriate policies are in place, which are consistently applied across the school. Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong and display an understanding of Christian values and principles in their relationships with each other and adults.

Pupils are encouraged to appreciate the awe and wonder of God’s creation and their involvement in sustainable development activities positively helps to raise their spiritual and moral awareness. They visit the Parish Church regularly for major Christian festivals, as well as other places of Christian worship. Older ones biennially experience a pilgrimage.

Pupils are very aware of the individuality of others and the need to treat everyone with equal respect. They regularly support charities and good causes.

3.2.2 How well does the school develop pupils' personal qualities and achievements?

Although a few pupils are at times boisterous, behaviour in the school overall is good. The school takes a very positive approach and expectations for good behaviour are clearly communicated. No pupils were excluded during the last 12 months.

Pupils have a very good attitude to learning and help each other. They show initiative and undertake responsibilities proudly and effectively. Their successes are praised and their views are valued. They are actively involved in the decision making process.

3.2.3 To what extent do the school's Christian values underpin wellbeing?

The school has a strong inclusive ethos and pupils state that they feel safe and happy. Staff act as good role models and every child is known individually; their needs are identified and effectively met and their progress is carefully monitored and tracked. The provision for those with additional needs and the more able is appropriate.

Relevant policies and strategies are in place to ensure pupils are free from bullying and harassment and any incidents are dealt with promptly and
effectively. Effective safeguarding and equal opportunities policies and procedures are in place. Pupils are aware of the need to keep fit and healthy and they participate in a range of sports and after school activities that contribute to their physical and mental wellbeing.

3.3 How well is the school led and managed as a Church school?

3.3.1 How effective is the school at securing distributed and sustained Church school leadership?

Staff work very well as a team and all make a valuable contribution to the school’s distinctive Christian character. Every teacher has specific managerial responsibilities, which they carry out conscientiously and effectively. The headteacher and deputy successfully co-ordinate collective worship together, although there is no unified whole school approach to planning and evaluation. Religious education is very effectively led by the deputy, who monitors planning and pupils’ work regularly and produces an annual review, although classroom observations have not been undertaken recently.

Religious education is treated as a core subject and is part of the previous and current school improvement plans and the self-evaluation report; all staff and governors contribute to these documents and the views of parents and pupils are taken into account. However, there is less attention to the development of collective worship and there is no specific reference to the three key questions of the Section 50 Framework.

All recommendations from the last Church inspection have been addressed within the school’s capability. The admissions policy issue, in particular, has been explored by the governing body and satisfactorily resolved.

3.3.2 How effective is leadership and management in securing the wellbeing of the school community?

Staff and pupils feel valued and respected and all share and promote the Christian ethos of the school. The headteacher provides very caring and empathetic leadership and is very well supported by the deputy. Pupils take a pride in the school and their achievements and enthusiastically participate in a range of projects, such as creating the garden area, which is based on a Church theme.

The governing body is very supportive and performs its duties and responsibilities very effectively. The vicar is the governor with special responsibility for religious education and collective worship.

3.3.3 How well does the leadership and management of the school secure and support a sense of Christian belonging within and beyond the Church in Wales?

There are close links with the Parish Church and school news is published in the weekly parish newsletter. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school and parishioners attend frequently for collective worship and coffee mornings. Confirmation classes have previously been held in the school, but at present they are conducted separately. Good support is provided by the Diocesan Schools’ Officer, although the staff as a whole have not attended any in-service
education and training in either collective worship or religious education during the last few years.

There are good links with other schools and the community, as well as with parents, all of whom know the school is a Church school based on Christian values. Around 90% agreed with the questions on the pre-inspection questionnaire, although a significant number has little knowledge of the religious education curriculum. The school prospectus now informs parents of their right to withdraw their children from collective worship and religious education lessons.

There is a very beneficial partnership with a local Pentecostal Church, where the school holds its annual nativity play, and there are links with a school in the United States of America and an orphanage in India.

4. **Strengths**

4.1 The school has a very distinctive Christian character which underpins its life and work.
4.2 The school has a strong inclusive ethos.
4.3 Acts of collective worship are consistently good with some excellent features.
4.4 The fortnightly celebration of the Eucharist is an excellent aspect.
4.5 Pupils achieve good standards in religious education.
4.6 There are some excellent features in the quality of teaching.
4.7 Staff work very well as a team and the headteacher provides very caring and empathetic leadership.
4.8 There are close links with the Parish Church.

5. **Focus for development**

5.1 Develop collective worship further by identifying targets for the school improvement plan and adopting more unified planning and evaluation procedures.
5.2 Ensure work in religious education is consistently well matched to pupils’ different ages and abilities.
5.3 Increase resources for the study of other world faiths and provide opportunities for pupils to visit a wider range of places of worship.
5.4 Ensure all staff have regular opportunities for continuous professional development in both religious education and collective worship.
5.5 Explore possible links between the school and the parish in relation to confirmation classes.
5.6 Ensure parents formally approve the adoption of the Church in Wales religious education syllabus in line with Diocesan policy.

The content of this report should be considered alongside Estyn’s Section 28 report.
Appendix

Headteacher: Mrs. Christina Bach
Chair of Governors: Mr. Kevin Pascoe
Diocesan Director of Education: Father Edwin Counsell
Dates of Section 50 Inspection: 22nd to 25th November 2010
Date of Previous Section 23 Inspection: 18th to 20th October 2004
Section 50 Inspector: Dr. P. David Ellis
National Society Inspector Number: 101
Date of publication: 16th December 2010

I would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils of Pen-y-Fai Primary School for their welcome and assistance during the inspection, as well as Mr. Rick Hawkley and his Estyn team for their help and co-operation.

Dr. P. David Ellis
16th December 2010