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YNG NGHYMRU



THE CHURCH  
IN WALES

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## Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

### **Blaenavon Heritage Voluntary Controlled Church in Wales Primary School**

Middle Coedcae Road,  
Blaenavon  
NP4 9AW

Diocese: Monmouth  
Local authority: Torfaen County Borough  
Dates of inspection: 3-6 March 2014  
Date of last inspection:  
School's unique reference number: 678/3028  
Headteacher: Mrs D Woodward  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Dilys Williams, NS Registration Number 511.

#### **School context**

Blaenavon Heritage VC Church in Wales Primary School opened in September 2011, following an amalgamation of three existing schools within the town of Blaenavon. The school relocated to a new building in April 2012. It has 510 pupils on roll aged 3-11 years, in a nursery school (morning and afternoon provision) and primary school. 1% of pupils use English as an additional language but none require language support. 25% of the pupils have free school meals, 21% have special educational needs.

#### **Established strengths**

The strengths of the school are:

- The inspirational and dynamic Christian vision and leadership of the headteacher, her leadership team, the local priest and governors
- The variety of styles and leadership of collective worship
- The sharing and continual reinforcement of the core Christian values
- The contribution and involvement by the governing body and local priest
- The exceptional pastoral care and support given to pupils by all staff
- The pupils' enthusiastic singing and obvious enjoyment of collective worship

#### **Focus for development**

The school should:

- Create effective and detailed evaluation sheets for collective worship and religious education (RE)
- Rewrite the RE schemes of work to ensure pupils are engaged and challenged in lessons
- Develop the sensory garden into an inspiring spiritual area where staff and pupils can go for reflection in a special place
- Increase the role of the values team so they become more involved in planning and implementing the core Christian values being embedded in the school
- Set a more regular timetable for worship at the local church
- Make the worship table a more central focal point for worship

#### **Prospects for Improvement**

The judgements given for the three Key Questions are GOOD, GOOD and EXCELLENT. The prospects for school improvement to three EXCELLENTS are very high.

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

The school is a warm and welcoming Christian place of learning where staff and pupils respect and value each other. The seven school aims (one of which states 'live, learn, play and pray every single day') help to ensure the distinctive Christian character of the school is central to all that has been achieved since the school opened. The twelve Christian Gospel values adopted by the school were chosen by the pupils and are delightfully illustrated on each floor of the school. The values have a positive influence on the very good behaviour demonstrated by pupils and are reinforced in 'positive behaviour hotspots' which remind pupils about making the right choices. A parent commented "the school fosters a positive Christian attitude towards the wellbeing of the pupils".

Pupils are nurtured in a praise culture which is evident throughout the school. The introduction of the Christian values journals is beginning to help pupils explore their beliefs and develop spiritually and morally. Pupils understand the Christian heritage of Wales through links in aspects of worship and coverage in RE lessons.

The local priest has a close relationship with staff and pupils who all say they would feel happy to approach him to share a problem or success. He is a regular visitor to the school and his presence further enhances the Christian character of the school and guarantees pupils are able to make real connections between the Church in Wales, the local church and the school.

Pupils are encouraged to be involved in raising money for charities both locally and nationally and to understand and be sensitive to the needs of others. Other faiths are taught in RE lessons and there is evidence of diversity and acceptance of others being celebrated in the school through involvement with members of the local community.

Pupils understand the importance of RE in their lives and generally enjoy lessons. Pupils respond thoughtfully and express ideas with confidence. They are becoming expert at producing lively presentations using the class iPads, consequently oral presentations are of a very high standard throughout the school.

Teaching is good and a range of teaching approaches are used. The majority of pupils achieve well and are acquiring new knowledge and skills. The current scheme of work is being rewritten and will eventually link to the Torfaen Agreed Syllabus and the Church in Wales RE Syllabus. The RE coordinator is working with a local PLC led by the Diocese.

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

Collective worship is central to the daily life of the school. In three observations during this inspection, the worship had a clear focus and provided a lively and positive start to the day. They were led by the headteacher, her deputy and the local priest; many aspects of excellence were observed. They were explicitly Christian and very well planned around the church year and the school's Christian values initiative. Files are kept which are detailed and contain all resources needed to ensure consistent delivery of worship. Some evaluation of worship has taken place but setting up a more rigorous evaluation system would lead to even more exciting and challenging worship in the future.

Pupils entered quietly to background music, the worship was opened with a liturgical greeting and the candle was lit. A more central position for the altar table would have been beneficial. Pupils were engrossed in the story telling and showed a great deal of understanding and knowledge of the Bible. Relationships between the staff, priest and pupils are exceptional: pupils when invited to come out and pray do so with confidence knowing they are encouraged and sustained in a loving caring environment where everyone is treated fairly and equally. Their spontaneous and personal prayers were charming. There is always a focused time for reflection which is generally personal, allowing

pupils from other faiths and backgrounds to contemplate in their own way. At the end of worship the Lord's Prayer and the Grace are said.

The pupils' singing is inspirational. A song is sung at the beginning and end of worship and is lively or reflective depending on the atmosphere the leader wishes to develop. The school song was sung in one worship session; it was written by the pupils and the words link Blaenavon World Heritage site with the pupils' happy journey through life in the school and local community and with asking God for blessings on the school. This inspector was quite moved watching the faces and listening to the voices of so many happy pupils and staff; an Estyn inspector commented on how good it was to see all staff present and supporting the school Christian ethos in collective worship.

Some prayers are said in Welsh during other times of prayer which take place at lunch time and the end of the day. The local priest works with pupils to plan acts of worship, especially in preparation for the Eucharist. Pupil involvement in worship is good. They help to set up the hall, organise the IT and run the power point presentations for leaders. They regularly lead worship or support adult leaders in a mature and self-assured manner.

Parents are invited to attend worship, especially when their child's year group is involved and when pupils are involved in the school Eucharist.

The introduction of timetabled classroom worship would further enhance the spiritual development of the pupils and ensure that the classroom reflection areas have a greater focus. Classroom worship could also be used occasionally instead of the whole school daily act of worship, which often impinges on curriculum time.

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

The school is exceptionally well led by a headteacher who is open, clear and enthusiastic in her determination to move the school forward. She is ably supported by a vibrant and committed deputy headteacher. Their strong vision, which is explicitly rooted in Christian teaching, is shared by the whole senior management team and all staff who work in any capacity in the school, and highlights the distributed style of leadership in the school. The headteacher has an outstanding capacity to think strategically about the next steps for the school. Her passion for the school's success makes her collaborative style of leadership easy to follow. Her positive and upbeat management qualities are backed by the deputy headteacher's own style of leadership which complements that of the headteacher. This ensures that between them they take all staff with them on their journey to excellence. The headteacher regularly engages in Diocesan activities, which has supported her own development of leadership of a Church in Wales school.

All staff received an introduction to what it means to be a church school, in 2012. This was helpful as only one out of the three former schools involved in the amalgamation was a church school. Staff speak positively about this training and feel that personal professional development is actively encouraged in the school.

The governing body have a very clear understanding of the purpose of a Church in Wales school and they help to ensure that its continued development is a high priority. The headteacher has built up expectations that governors should come to school and be seen by staff and pupils. Governors like the open door policy and regularly take part in learning walks. The chair of governors takes her role very seriously and meets with the headteacher on a fortnightly basis to offer her support and encouragement and to identify areas for development.

The local priest works very closely with the school to develop a close partnership between church, community and school.

Following the amalgamation of two non-church schools with one church school, parents now expressed their opinion that being a church school added an extra element and inclusivity to its character. They felt there was a greater sense of reason and purpose to being part of a school with a

strong Christian ethos. Parents are welcome to join in with any events that take place in the parish church or at other places of worship within the town and local community.

The leadership of RE and collective worship is improving. The new coordinator appointed in September 2013 is formulating a consistent approach to teaching and learning in RE which is ensuring standards are consistently improved. Effective links with the core school Christian values are being developed between collective worship and RE.

<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</b>	<b>YES</b>