

Barrow Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Great Barrow,
Chester,
Cheshire.
CH3 7HW

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Cheshire West and Chester

Date of inspection: Friday 8th February 2013

Date of last inspection: 9th July 2008

School's unique reference number: 111270

Headteacher: Mr. A. Ramsden

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. Anne B. Woodcock 445

School context

Barrow Church of England Primary School serves the rural villages of Barrow on the outskirts of Chester. The vast majority of the 63 pupils are of white British heritage and they come from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Few pupils attract the pupil premium but the number of pupils with additional needs is above average. The school benefits from experienced leadership and a stable, dedicated staffing structure.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barrow Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Christian values are very well-established and understood by all members of the school community. The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher and the excellent support of the governing body and local church, together with a dedicated staff, provide an explicitly Christian environment in which pupils' personal and spiritual development is effectively nurtured and grown

Established strengths

- The caring and nurturing relationships, based on Christian love and trust, which effectively support pupils and their families.
- The Christian vision and leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors, who are well-supported by dedicated staff.
- The excellent behaviour and attitude of pupils.
- The strong and mutually supportive links with the church which enhance pupils' spiritual development.

Focus for development

- Provide opportunities for pupils to be regularly engaged in planning, leading and evaluating acts of worship.
- Establish a formal system to monitor and evaluate the impact of collective worship.

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

Pupils feel very safe and valued in school. They are confident and articulate, expressing their ideas and opinions within an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Pupils have a clear understanding of Christian values explaining, "We all get along and help each other, treating others as we want to be treated because that is what Jesus told us all to do. We trust each other and we're honest." Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are highly motivated and eager to learn. Very good teaching and high expectations inspire pupils to strive to achieve the goals set for them. They say that their teachers always make learning fun. Relationships throughout the school are excellent, being nurturing and supportive. Pupils have great trust in and

respect for their teachers. They say that they always listen, help them with their work and show them how to improve. Pupils with additional needs are very well-supported, enabling them to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Pupil achievement is consistently high and all pupils make good progress. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The enriched, creative curriculum promotes and enhances pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development very effectively. High quality displays reflect the breadth of work undertaken by pupils of all ages. They demonstrate the high level of collaboration between staff and pupils as well as the very positive, welcoming and supportive approach a visitor feels when in the school. Christian symbols such as fabric crosses, prayer trees and wall hangings made by pupils make a very positive contribution to the school's Christian character. Religious Education (RE) makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Pupils explain, "We need to learn about what other people think and do and how they worship God." The school's extensive outdoor learning environment is used very effectively. Pupils grow and harvest fruits and vegetables, displaying their horticultural abilities in annual shows and open days. Pupils study wildlife and contribute to the conservation of woodland by, for example, the recent planting of snowdrops in the local wood. The outdoor classroom provides space for worship and reflection, in which pupils can experience stillness and appreciate the beauty of God's world. Pupils relate their understanding of Christian values to the need to support those less fortunate than themselves. They are proud of their charitable giving to Children in Need and Sports Relief and the recent 'Sign2Sing' event.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Pupils demonstrate a very positive and enthusiastic attitude to worship. "It makes you feel happy inside," explained one pupil. Worship is central to the daily life of the school. It is firmly based on Bible teaching and Christian values. Planning is thorough, reflecting the celebration of Christian and other festivals such as Chinese New Year. Themes covered in worship are also discussed within the classroom, ensuring that pupils have additional time to reflect and consider their ideas. The weekly Christian value focus also forms part of the celebration and achievement worship. Pupils are actively engaged in worship. "We interact a lot," said one pupil, "helping to act out stories and answer questions." Strengthened links with the church have had a very positive impact on the worship life of the school. The vicar leads worship regularly, using a planned programme which focuses on Bible stories. The 'Open the Book' team lead worship each week, providing a different style of worship which is much appreciated by the pupils. Prayer and reflection are very important features of the school's worship life. Pupils know traditional prayers such as the Lord's Prayer and they write and use their own prayers. Very effective use is made of the 'intercession book' in which pupils write their personal concerns such as, 'my granddad has cancer'. These are shared and included in collective prayers. Prayer is used at lunchtime and at the close of the day. Pupils are familiar with some Anglican traditions and practices, such as the use of responses and greetings at the opening and closing of worship. The church is used for special services at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Pupils help to plan and lead these services which are well-attended and valued by parents and members of the church community. However, pupils have few opportunities to plan and lead worship regularly and this is an area for development. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their worship experiences and do so with honesty. One pupil wrote, "It gave you a good message-to be grateful for what you've got." However, although worship is monitored informally by the headteacher and staff, a formal system to evaluate the impact of worship has not yet been established and is a focus for development.

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

The headteacher and governors have a very clear and distinctive Christian vision for the school. This is agreed and shared by staff who demonstrate the Christian values of love, hope and trust consistently. Relationships throughout the school are strong and mutually supportive and morale is very high. The school has developed an exciting, creative curriculum which incorporates Christian values and ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is consistently enhanced and supported. Governors monitor the work of the school very effectively. They provide considerable practical support, acting as

willing helpers and running clubs such as the Green Team gardening club and Allsorts religious club. The issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed. Church school issues feature strongly in school improvement planning. Governors ensure that RE and collective worship are very well-managed and resourced and that evaluations lead to improvement. Links with the church are strong. The school contributes to the monthly church and village magazine and pupil work is displayed in church. The school is a focal point for the community being actively involved in the summer fete and horticultural show as well as with church-based events.. The pupil voice is well-established. Pupils are confident that their opinions are valued. They are proud to accept responsibility, acting as play buddies, librarians and eco- monitors. For example, pupil road safety officers run competitions and visit the playgroup to talk to the children about road safety. Pupils' understanding of global issues is enhanced through the school's well-established links with a school in Sierra Leone. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. They are confident that their children are happy, nurtured and well-supported within a distinctly Christian environment. "The staff move mountains to try to help us as a family," explained one parent. Parents say that their children grow in confidence and demonstrate their understanding of Christian values in the way they behave at home. Parents are fully engaged in supporting learning, saying that they are kept well-informed of their children's progress. Many act as willing helpers in class and in extra-curricular activities. Partnerships with local businesses and societies are used effectively to support pupils' outdoor environmental activities. Effective use is made of school networks and partnerships to support teaching and learning and enhance provision

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