

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Gomersal St. Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided First and Nursery School**

Shirley Avenue  
Gomersal  
Cleckheaton  
BD19 4 NA

#### **Diocese: Wakefield**

Local authority: Kirklees  
Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010  
Date of last inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007  
School's unique reference number: 107747  
Headteacher: Mrs S. Scott  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs L. Alvy NS 170

#### **School context**

This smaller than average school serves the small town of Gomersal and increasingly other neighbouring areas that are beyond its immediate boundary. Almost all pupils are of White British Heritage. Almost all speak English at home. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, are broadly average. This can vary widely year on year. The school holds the Healthy Schools Gold Award.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

St Mary's is a school where the spiritual and intellectual development of its children is at the forefront of its Christian mission. A dedicated leadership team actively supported by a united governing body means that children are provided with every opportunity to succeed. A welcoming and inspiring environment greets the children each day and there is no doubt that the needs of the children come first. 'Learning the Christian way' gives a clear message to all that this inclusive school provides rich learning experiences, fosters excellent relationships and behaviour and fulfils its faith and aims in outstanding Christian principles and practice.

#### **Established strengths**

- Learners' personal care and development leading to impressive behaviour and attitudes.
- Richly planned opportunities to inspire discussion and reflection encouraging an acceptance, respect and celebration of diversity.
- Effective partnership with parents, the church and the community.
- The importance given to Collective Worship and Religious Education in the life of the school.

#### **Focus for development**

- Ensure routine monitoring and assessment of Religious Education tracks and analyses pupils' progress more accurately.
- Celebrate and record parents' views on the impact of children's church school education.

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

Children gain confidence and flourish as individuals supported by the strong Christian values promoted by the school. The school nurtures and celebrates individual achievement successfully by raising children's self-esteem and motivation. As a result children, from the oldest to the youngest, talk eagerly and confidently about how much they enjoy school, how teachers help them to feel safe and happy and that learning is fun. Consistently good quality teaching and learning ensures they achieve their potential and underlying Christian moral principles foster in children exemplary attitudes and behaviour. Children are taught

effectively to value and celebrate diversity and action since the last inspection has increased their understanding. As a result children display equal confidence in comparing aspects of different world faiths or proudly discussing their friend's achievements. The impact of a well planned, rich curriculum, high quality display and resources help to bring learning to life. Rooted in Christian beliefs children's spiritual well-being is carefully balanced alongside progress in learning. Many other opportunities provided through the robust partnership between school, church and the local community help children to achieve success and prepare them to become responsible citizens. Consequently parents trust in the school to teach by Christian example and help their children to achieve success.

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

Inspiring acts of collective worship enrich the daily life of the school. Collective worship has a high status, attended and led by staff and visitors, promoted with parents through 'Tots Praise'; it encompasses everything that is excellent about this distinctively Christian school. An imaginative use of symbols and artefacts provided moving and spiritual teaching on the theme of baptism. Its impact left younger children engrossed and thrilled that 'Daisy' had been baptised whilst challenging older children to ponder on the wonder of the light given at baptism. Opportunities for prayer, reflection, and quiet alongside joyful singing are integral points of well planned worship and each contributes effectively to children's spiritual as well as social and moral development. As a result children respond confidently and openly in their discussions and are sensitive to the plight of others shown by their generous fund raising for national and local charities. There is a centrality of worship provided by school and parish extending children's experience of a 'living God'. Comments from older children such as 'we worship God and He would be disappointed if we did not join in' or 'we learn about people's feelings', illustrate its impact on children's burgeoning sensitivity, attitudes and behaviour towards others.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**

Provision in religious education is good. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is well within the standard expected. By the end of Year 4 standards are likely to be above those expected. Pupils' enjoy learning and achieve well particularly in relation to their starting points. Good subject management and comprehensive curriculum planning effectively supports the systematic progression of learning. Consistently good quality teaching provides effective questioning and increases children's understanding of key aspects of the Christian faith and other major world religions. Attitudes to learning are often excellent and in both lessons seen children worked very hard to develop their ideas. A Year 2 lesson effectively led children to reflect on the rules of Buddhism and the difficult issues such as care for living things. By Year 4 children's good quality work of different abilities shows skill in developing religious ideas in relation to leadership and trust in religious teaching for instance. Higher attaining children answer questions insightfully showing a good understanding of beliefs. Children remember what they have been taught because RE is creatively linked to other curriculum subjects and gives them many opportunities for reflection and creative expression. The assessment of achievement and standards currently in place is under review and is not yet sufficiently accurate to show whether children are making the most progress of which they are capable.

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

A strong team of staff and governors is excellently led by the Headteacher. There is true dedication to 'living the Christian faith' and this lies at the heart of the school. As one parent succinctly put it 'the school acts its mission and aims and bends over backwards to help children to achieve'. Parental trust in the school as a result is paramount. However the school has yet to fully document parents and visitors good opinions as part of its self-evaluation process. The significant partnership between school and church jointly enhances the creation of its Christian vision and purpose that also supports the wider community. Governors monitor progress and achievement in their role as class link governors and in partnership with staff are united in the belief that providing a rich curriculum and other exciting opportunities will give children every chance to succeed. They know the school well and are by turns both supportive and challenging. As a consequence standards are good

and children often display exemplary attitudes to learning because they feel secure, calm, valued and happy. Community cohesion is high on the school's agenda and as a consequence the school is successful in helping children to value and celebrate diversity. It is abundantly clear from talking to children, staff, governors and parents that a distinctively Christian ethos drives the work of the school and why children leave St. Mary's with confidence to step out into the next stage of their education.

SIAS report 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010. St. Mary's CE VA First and Nursery Gomersal Cleckheaton BD19 4NA.