

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Albany Road
Montpelier
Bristol
BS6 5LQ

Diocese: Bristol

Local authority: City of Bristol
Dates of inspection: 4th June 2008
Date of last inspection: January 2004
School's unique reference number: 109144
Headteacher: Claire Waters
Inspector's name and number: Daphne Spitzer-37

School context

St Barnabas Church of England Primary School is a popular school located in the heart of city of Bristol, with 206 pupils on roll. The majority of the children are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with about a quarter from refugee and asylum seeker families and more than half from families whose home language is not English. Mobility of children and families is high. The school provides a nursery class as well as eight other classes which are housed in the main building, and in two separate blocks apart from the school. The grounds are attractive, particularly the playing field which offers a unique setting of natural calm and beauty.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Barnabas Church of England school are good

The headteacher is an outstanding leader of this very special church school. The exceptionally strong Christian ethos which enables a high degree of involvement and support from the parent community is the key to the school's success.

Established strengths

- Inspirational leadership of the headteacher
- Highly effective partnership of the headteacher, deputy head, staff and governing body
- Strong Christian values which are instrumental in establishing and encouraging community cohesion
- Community curriculum which reflects the needs of the learners, places a high emphasis on RE and is extremely well led.

Focus for development

- To formalise a strategic long and short term plan for the development of the school's Christian distinctiveness
- To further develop and strengthen links with St Agnes church and its worshipping community
- To formally monitor and evaluate acts of collective worship.

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

Christian values shine out of St Barnabas primary school. It lives its vision "we let our light shine at St Barnabas." Christian values permeate the life of the school and have a demonstrable effect on the children's academic and personal development. Children are happy and feel very secure in school. One child said he felt totally "at home." All learners feel highly valued and special due to the way all staff care for each individual child. The way this community uses Christian values as a means of uniting peoples of different faiths is outstanding. The shared beliefs of Christianity and Islam are celebrated as integral to the

daily life of the school. Children recognise the importance of learning in RE. It was described by one child as enabling “you to learn about each other’s religion so that you can get to know each other better.” Relationships throughout the school at all levels are excellent. Children are kind and caring towards each other and bullying is rare. Older children act as peer mediators at lunch times ensuring both parties in any dispute are listened to equally. The school council is very active in promoting the “pupil voice” and is regularly consulted about many aspects of school life. There is a great emphasis placed on citizenship and taking responsibility as seen by the Year 5 visit to the Houses of Parliament to meet their MP. The value placed on the children’s diverse backgrounds is evident by the way the school’s community curriculum is tailor made to meet the needs of all the learners. This highly acclaimed community curriculum also develops the learners concern for the local and wider world and this is demonstrated by fundraising events such as “Seeds for Africa” and “Children in Need.” Parents highly value the way they are able to contribute to children’s learning and their involvement is also maximised by the way they accompany classes on visits around the neighbourhood, for example to the shops and park, on a weekly basis. Visitors to school are warmly welcomed and are an important feature of school life. Volunteers from business partnerships regularly read with children. Extra care is taken to ensure learning programmes are developed to meet individual needs. Spiritual development is a high priority as evidenced by the reflection corners in each classroom, each display having been chosen and compiled specially by the children in the class. The school’s Christian foundation is widely known, understood and valued by the school community. However, as yet there are no Christian signs or symbols on display in the entrance or the school grounds which would enhance the school’s Christian distinctiveness.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship is an important event in the daily life of the school. All staff are present and governors often also attend. On the day of the inspection the piano was played by the decorator which further enhanced the whole school community atmosphere. Collective Worship strongly underpins the school’s core values of inclusion and respect. The children’s attitudes to worship are very positive. Many opportunities are offered to the children to participate which adds to their enjoyment. Following recent consultations with the children their participation is very high. Resources and role play are well used to enable learning to be visual as far as possible. The current theme of humility had been well illustrated by a child taking the part of Jesus and washing the feet of his friends. Themes for collective worship are planned by the headteacher using mainly the “Values for Life” diocesan resource. Children enter and leave the hall in a quiet respectful manner. The children’s behaviour is exceptionally good, as evidenced by their responses and singing. At the start, candles are lit and greetings exchanged, “Peace be with you” in English and in Arabic. The worship ended with a prayer read by a child. At regular intervals in the school’s calendar a special religious festival, such as Eid or Divali is celebrated as part of one class’s community curriculum topic and parents are invited to this celebration assembly. It is a very special event in the life of the school community and many parents attend. Children recognised their school’s founding saint as someone who encouraged others, a Christian role model used to unite all the children. Easter is celebrated by a service in St Agnes’ church. Spiritual awareness is exceptionally high. Value for religion whether Christian or another faith is a tangible part of daily school life.

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

The headteacher has a strong personal vision and together with the senior management team and governing body provides highly effective leadership. The school’s Christian aims and values are well known within the school community and supported by all faith groups. The school’s Christian vision promotes unity and cohesion between diverse religions especially that of Islam and Christianity based on shared beliefs and values. The governors are very supportive and active in school. They are regular visitors to collective worship and RE lessons and offer both prayerful and practical support. The school is very involved with the diocese and staff regularly visit diocesan training venues for professional development. Governors have recently become involved with the school’s evaluation of its own Christian distinctiveness following recent training. As yet there is no strategic whole school plan for developing the school’s Christian foundation. There are productive links with St Agnes church

and the congregation. The new parish priest's recent appointment has been enthusiastically welcomed and he has contributed much in a short time to the life of the school. A Christingle service was reintroduced due to his presence. He attends the celebration assemblies helping to build bridges with families of other religious and cultural communities. Leaders of other faith groups, for example, the local imam and rabbi also visit school and classes visit local places of worship, the mosque and mandir, as part of their community curriculum. Parents contribute much to work of the school and to all children's learning. They visit classes to talk about Pakistan, or Somalia. Children also act as much valued "peer experts." Parents also play a significant role in welcoming newcomers by assisting governors and staff with the school's New Arrivals and Family Learning programmes. The outstanding community curriculum is lead and managed by an able and enthusiastic teacher who is a valued member of the school's leadership team. She ensures that all staff are well supported, have had the requisite training so that the teaching and learning in their units of work are good. She regularly monitors lessons and assesses children's learning. The headteacher is an inspirational leader. Together with the deputy head, she works tirelessly to ensure that the school's Christian vision of developing the uniqueness and inherent creativity of every individual is fulfilled at St Barnabas church school.

SIAS report June 2008, St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Bristol, BS6 5LQ