



YR EGLWYS
YNG NGHYMRO



THE CHURCH
IN WALES

Gwella Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

Llanbedr Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School

Ysgol Llanbedr
Crickhowell
Powys
NP8 1SR

Diocese: Swansea and Brecon

Local authority: Powys
Dates of inspection: 31st March – 1st April 2014
Date of last inspection: March 2008
School's unique reference number:
Headteacher: Sadie Ricketts
Inspector's name and number: Mark Lawson-Jones 670

School context

The small village of Llanbedr is situated two miles north of Crickhowell. The village school was founded in 1728 becoming a National Society Church school in 1911. It is organised into two classes, a Foundation Phase class and a Key Stage 2 class accommodating the 35 children on roll. There are also four 3 year olds who attend the school four mornings a week. The head teacher teaches 70% of the week.

Summary Judgement: How distinctive and effective is the school as a Church in Wales school?

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a Church in Wales school is good.

In all Key Questions the school was found to be good or better, there are no important shortcomings. The distinctive Christian character of the school is exceptional, as is the quality of leadership and good communication that exists throughout the school. The impact of collective worship on the school community is good; it is well planned and has a positive impact on the distinctiveness of the school as a Church foundation school.

Established strengths

- Good and effective management with a clear understanding of challenges
- Good links between the Church, school and wider community

Focus for development

- To develop a RE Portfolio of levelled work by the summer term of 2015.
- The focal point to whole school collective worship could benefit from the use of seasonal liturgical colours and a more prominent placement in the school hall.
- To develop a regular system of assessing RE skills and progression by the Summer term of 2015.

Progress since last inspection

The school was last inspected in January 2008 and three recommendations were made;

- Construct a designated “sacred area” in the KS2 classroom as exists in the other classrooms
- Introduce a period of “guided silence” immediately following the teaching material in collective worship
- Continue to maintain and explore new links with other diocesan schools to share good practice

All recommendations were included in a *Section 50* action plan. Guided silence is used in collective worship to good effect, and there is a ‘sacred area’ in the KS2 classroom. It is difficult to judge exactly what action was taken to address the exploration of *new links*, however current links with the Diocese are very good.

KQ1: How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

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

Pupils should be achieving their full potential in our church schools. Maximising learning is paramount. Learners have academic, personal and spiritual needs, all of which should be addressed in a loving environment where distinctively Christian values and teaching are encountered.

The school is situated in the beautiful village of Llanbedr, close to Crickhowell. The school is well maintained having recently benefitted from replacing, repairing and reordering, this has been undertaken in a thoughtful and practical way. The bright school sign is well placed and welcoming, people are left in no doubt that this is a Church foundation school. In addition to this, the fencing, flowers, plants and other decoration outside the school compliments the well presented and well chosen displays inside the school.

Upon entering the school, there is a montage of self-portraits of all children in the school, this is set against very good displays depicting Welsh heritage, particularly the life of Dewi Sant, adjacent to photographs and drawings from a visit to St. Peter’s church in the village. The Diocesan vision logo and statement declaring that *rooted in Christ* children will *gather, grow and go* is present in both Welsh and English, as is the original National Society Certificate, it is rare to find such a certificate displayed. When questioned, I was told that the school wishes to promote the Church foundation, because it is ‘*proud*’ to be a Church in Wales school.

The presence of *prayer areas* in both year groups serve several purposes; firstly to act as a focus where a Bible, a cross and some class prayers can be displayed, secondly the areas act as quiet areas where children are encouraged to reflect and give thanks. They are well thought-out and well presented.

It is clear that the distinctive Christian character of the school is particularly well supported and communicated. The children benefit from this sense of belonging to something bigger, and were all able to explain clearly why Church schools are ‘different’ when questioned. They spoke of the kind and caring ethos, learning about God, and stewardship of Creation and God’s gifts to us.

The distinctively Christian character shapes the relationship between the children, there is a great sense of interdependence and being on a shared journey. The Christian character supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and wellbeing of all learners and each child benefits from the clear ethos and values in the school community.

The Parents Meeting was particularly positive and well attended, with over two thirds of families being represented. Those present were enthusiastic about the presence of a “*buddy system*” to support

children, how the school was “like a family”, and how the school “instils confidence in the children”. One parent spoke on how “good things” are “embedded”.

Many small rural village schools enjoy good church-school links, however these can sometimes be a little imbalanced. In the case of Llanbedr school and St. Peter’s church, this is not the case. The church regularly invites the school to join in activities, and a full schedule of events throughout the Christian year are planned and delivered. As the new incumbent is evaluating how to proceed in pastoral and priestly ministry with the school, he tells me how positive and valuable the current links are, and how he hopes they will grow.

It is clear that the schools concern for the whole child is paramount, and children with or without a Christian faith benefit from policies, ethos statements and initiatives.

How well does religious education contribute to the Christian Character of the school?

The contribution of Religious Education to the Christian Character of the school is **good**

The Christian character of the school contributes to the academic achievement, personal development and wellbeing of all learners. This is achieved by believing that a good faith foundation will support the ethos, in turn enhancing the atmosphere of positive regard for one another, finally resulting in good teaching and learning.

Llanbedr Church in Wales school is a Voluntary Aided school, therefore the teaching of religious education will be dealt with in KQ3, this question asks how religious education contributes to the character and life of the school.

Throughout the school, children were able to talk confidently about the Bible stories reflected in the displays and workbooks, relating them to every day life. In Foundation Phase, the Reverend Freddie Fisher, a teaching tool soft toy, links the teaching of faith to the distinctive Anglican nature of the school. In KS2 a series of RE lessons have prompted thought provoking discussion on the life of Jesus, and the way in which we should apply the lessons to everyday life.

Religious education at Llanbedr encourages children to develop an understanding of Christianity, and its practice in the Church in Wales, it contributes to the spiritual development and supports them as they search for meaning and answers in life. The *values* based approach is being developed to link the half-termly *Value* with teaching, this will result in a more rounded and consistent approach across the Curriculum and Key Stages.

The contribution of religious education to the Christian character of the school is clearly **good**.

KQ2: What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

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

At the heart of the Christian faith is its lived out expression in worship. In daily worship pupils and members of the school community will observe, encounter and be impacted by the living faith of Christians. The Church in Wales expression of that faith will reflect the parish or local church traditions and those of the world-wide Anglican communion. For each pupil and member of the community spiritual development will be fostered, together with positive attitudes towards the search for a faith to live by.

The statutory requirements for acts of collective worship are met in Llanbedr Church in Wales primary school.

Collective worship is both well planned and delivered, the Collective Worship Policy declares that worship is intended to be; worthy, considering spiritual and moral issues, with the exploration of beliefs whilst reinforcing positive attitudes and values. So in participating and responding children might reflect on what it means to be human.

Planning for collective worship is generally the responsibility of the Head teacher, but teachers contribute to the process. Every member of the school staff, the *vicar* and occasional visitors will be involved in leading acts of worship, children also make regular contributions and assist in the planning. Each week there are three whole-school acts of collective worship, one class based, and one *celebration* assembly.

The Head teacher delivered collective worship observed on Monday 31st March. The children entered quietly to well-chosen music. The focus of a candle and a cross, placed on a table at the front of the hall helped the space feel *set apart* at the start of the collective worship.

The half-termly *value* which was *trust* was investigated and explained by example and the Biblical story of Jesus calming the storm, children read the text. The large displays in the hall depicting a church, and the *values* were very good and were used to reinforce the message. The worship continued with a description and reflection on the poem *Footsteps*, thoughtfully drawing out the importance of trusting that God is with us, even when we feel alone and sad.

A reflection stilled the children, as we led into the prayers. It was clear that all present were engaged with the act of worship. When questioned later, many could show they had reflected, some wished to talk about their own times of difficulty. The act of worship was around fifteen minutes long and was delivered at a good pace, with a good contrast between reflection and response.

On Tuesday 1st April, I observed collective worship taking place separately in both classes. In KS2, it was clear that with a smaller group it was possible to unravel more details in the stories, bringing a depth of understanding. Similarly in Foundation Phase, it was possible to tell stories from picture books interactively with a smaller group of younger children. Tuesday morning acts of worship in class have the potential to develop, possibly becoming the place where reflection on the *values* and the nature of faith are given real-world understanding.

On Wednesday, a group of parishioners attend to deliver an *Open the Book* collective worship to the whole school. This is a constructive and positive link, which has many benefits for the school at different levels. Firstly the upbeat and attractive delivery of Bible stories for the children, and also the benefits positive church-school links bring.

It is clear that collective worship in Llanbedr Church in Wales primary school is very good, consistent and clear. It supports the ethos of the school, leading to good relationships and reflection on what it means to be a faith school.

Children spoke in positive terms about collective worship, they were clear about how they perceive the school to be 'different' from other schools in terms of having 'different rules' and being 'more caring' by virtue of the faith foundation.

In summary, when the question *what is the impact of collective worship on the whole school community?* The answer is that through solid and consistent delivery, the impact on the school is clearly **good**.

KQ3: How effective is the religious education?

The effectiveness of religious education is **good**

At the heart of religious education are key beliefs which impact on the way of life of faithful people. For Christians, Jesus Christ, as the resurrected Son of God, is the example to follow. His teachings, from which derive Christian values and principles, are the root of the aims and expectations a church school lives by.

Llanbedr Church in Wales primary school follows the Church in Wales Scheme of Work for the teaching of Religious Education. The teaching of thinking skills, developing communication and encouraging enjoyment are all part of the teaching of RE in the school.

The RE policy highlights the importance of developing a child's ability to make *reasoned and informed judgements about religious, spiritual and moral questions and to apply these insights.*

Although children do not possess individual RE workbooks, their work is set in a topic book, which might form part of a display, and then when taken down, is stored in the topic book again. These are then used for reference for future topics and for reflection.

Individual pupil progress is recorded at the end of each year, and RE outcomes are decided and reported at the end of KS2. Progress on RE is reported to the parents bi-annual parent's evening and a written report is provided at the end of each school year.

The school has recently adopted the *values based* way of teaching RE, the Head teacher believes this is starting to show positive results in raising standards and consistency in teaching and learning, as it has in the delivery of collective worship. The Head teacher has also recently become involved with the *Diocesan Headteacher PLC* which has focussed on the evaluation and assessment of lessons for RE.

During the inspection period I observed one lesson from KS2 and one lesson from Foundation Phase. In KS2, the learning objective was to *write a poem about feelings*. The lesson began with a journey through the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection, looking specifically at the Gospel according to Ss. Luke and John. Different levels were evident here as groups used either the *Good News Translation* or the *Childrens Bible*. The children clearly knew the story well, and were able to recall elements of the narrative. There was a good discussion about *feelings* and the class moved to a differentiated activity, with less able children writing in the form of an acrostic poem, those of middle ability writing in Haiku style, and the higher ability children writing a poem with personification.

Support for the less able children was exceptional, as a teaching assistant engaged the group, and kept the focus on the task.

The lesson was well planned, clear and of a good pace. The teacher delivered the lesson in a robust and accomplished style, which was clearly very good.

In Foundation Phase, the RE lesson concentrated on the story of the Good Samaritan. The children were similarly familiar with the story and interacted well as the story was told. Feelings were investigated as the story unfolded, as was the actions of the characters. The class was split to groups to re-enact the story and answer the question *who is my neighbour?* Good structured activities supported the less able and more able, creating some excellent interactions. The teacher and support staff energetically moved between the stations to support the work, and draw out themes emerging.

With good differentiation here too, both lessons were well planned and delivered. There were some elements of very good practice, especially in the promotion of independent learning for the children, the behaviour of the pupils, and the teachers' questioning which promoted good understanding of the

topics.

There is good teaching and learning in Religious Education

KQ4: How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

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

The living faith and clarity of vision of the school leaders are paramount in setting the example of policy and practice in the church school. Rooting the school in the Christian narrative enables a working environment where spirituality is central to the well being of individuals and the community as a whole.

There is effective leadership and management at Llanbedr Church in Wales primary school, the Head teacher is well supported by the chair and the Governing Body. There are good meaningful links with the local church, and parents feel involved and consulted about the vision and direction of the school.

For a small rural school, the Parent's Meeting was particularly well attended. The pre-inspection questionnaire has raised no particular concerns, and many comments were positive. Parents felt that the school prepared children well for life, and they learned to '*look out for one another*'. The *buddy system* was singled out for particular praise, believing that this was an example of *good practice*, which is *embedded* in the school. One parent said she felt the school was critical in "*preparing children for the future*". Parents spoke of how the Head teacher, when appointed, called all parents to the school to set out her plans and hear their views. This was considered to be exceptional. Parents continue to play a significant part in the life of this small school, and are proud of all the school achieves for their children.

The links between the school and the church were more difficult to quantify at the Parent's Meeting, mainly because the relationships are longstanding and deeply rooted in the community. The Harvest, Christmas and Easter trips to the church are also supported by several other events that are not commonly found, including Mothering Sunday celebrations that significantly increase attendance at St. Peter's Church. Children are included on the *flower rota*, and spend time decorating the church for events: This is balanced by parishioners taking responsibility for collective worship with the Open the Book team. The Head teacher is active in planning for such interactions and partnerships.

The Chair of Governors is a regular and active presence in the school. He was able to explain how there is a *three way* relationship between the school, church and community, working together in a *positive partnership*. The Governing Body were involved with producing the *Ethos Statement*, there is regular scrutiny of data, and they ask questions on all aspects of education and school life. The Chair believes that the school has "*come on leaps and bounds*" as a result of the *vision* and *enthusiasm* of the Head teacher.

The Head teacher believes that even a small rural school should be able to benefit as much as larger schools, and is proactive in seeking out funding for equipment and resources to enhance teaching, learning and the school environment.

Teaching Assistants feel valued and part of the team, with good communication and regular meetings keeping them involved. This is one factor in producing the evidently good staff team interpersonal relationships.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, the Section 50 Self-Evaluation Report shows that the school has addressed the recommendations in the previous Section 50 report.

Through the reordering of the school, raising the expectations of staff and creating positive partnerships it is clear that the school is led and managed very well as a Church School.

The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship	Y
The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education (where inspected)	Y

I would like to record my sincere thanks to the Head teacher Sadie Ricketts, the staff, parents and children for their warm welcome to Llanbedr Church in Wales primary school. I would also like to thank lead inspector Tony Bate and the Estyn team for their assistance.

Revd Mark Lawson-Jones
NS Inspector Number 670