



## Gwella Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

Clyro Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Clyro, Herefordshire, HR3 5LE

Diocese: Swansea and Brecon  
Local authority: Powys  
Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019  
Date of last inspection: May 2012  
School's unique reference number: 6663033  
Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Groves  
Inspector's name: Kathryn Thomas



### School context

Clyro Church in Wales (VC) Primary School is a small rural primary school of 91 pupils situated close to the border with Herefordshire. Most pupils live within the catchment area which is described by the school as relatively prosperous. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic groups is below average. Attendance has been above 96% for the four of the past five years. The school has very strong links with St Michael and All Angels' parish church in the village.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Clyro Church in Wales VC Primary School as a Church in Wales school are **EXCELLENT**

- This is a caring church school community where the Christian values embedded in the everyday life of the school foster excellent relationships at every level.
- The school is extremely well led by an inspirational Christian leader who ensures that all are valued within the school community. Her unwavering commitment to the school's Christian mission promotes good relationships and a community of strong mutual support.
- Pupils are growing into well-rounded and self-motivated young people who are thoughtful, reflective, respectful, articulate, tolerant and independent. They are increasingly able to apply the Christian vision and values of the school to their learning, behaviour and decisions.
- The significant partnership with the vicar and parish of St Michael and All Angels' Church that enriches the worshipping life of this school exceptionally well.
- The success of Multi Faith days where pupils study religions other than Christianity has allowed pupils to gain a deeper understanding of different faiths in modern Britain.

### Focus for development

- Build upon learners' enthusiasm to enable them to plan, lead and effectively evaluate collective worship. Give them a sense of ownership and to allow them to have an additional dimension to their spiritual development.

**The prospects for improvement in the future are EXCELLENT**

## **Has the school a distinctive Christian character and is this reflected in the experience of all learners?**

### **The impact and effectiveness of Collective Worship – EXCELLENT**

Collective worship is an important aspect of the life and culture of the school. It affirms, celebrates and enriches its Christian ethos. Pupils say it feels like being in a family. Acts of worship promote the school's core values very effectively and make a very positive impact on the spiritual development of pupils and adults. Pupils are acquiring a mature understanding of the school's Christian values and how these support them. For example, they say that 'the value of respect encourages us to look after our new school, our peers and our teachers'.

Pupils give examples of how Bible stories challenge them to think about their own behaviour as well as learning about people. For example, they say that acting out bible stories in role-play sessions helps them better understand Jesus' messages. Pupils are developing very well spiritually. They are thoughtful and reflective in their thinking; older pupils in particular have the confidence and ability to express their own, well-informed opinions and apply this to their developing views of God and Jesus. Pupils know about the seasons and liturgical colours of the church's calendar and the Lord's prayer and have a growing awareness of the Trinity.

There are opportunities for children to pray throughout the school day both in acts of worship and at other times. Pupils understand how prayer is used to communicate with God and how it can guide them in their personal lives. They write thoughtful prayers to place on the values tree to say sorry, thank you or to ask for something for someone else. Although pupils participate willingly at various degrees, for example, through reading prayers, pupils think 'it would be fun to organise and lead worship.' Currently there are too few opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate worship themselves.

The vicar is a highly valued leader of worship whom the pupils see as a friend as well as a leader. The extremely close partnership between the school and church makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' understanding of aspects of Christian belief and enables them to gain a good knowledge of local Anglican traditions and practice. Pupils experience a number of Christian traditions within worship, for example they discuss why different colours are used during the Church year and why the candle they use is significant. Other ministers lead worship which helps to widen pupils' view of Christianity. For example, a local Baptist minister leads worship on a monthly basis and Quakers and Roman Catholic clergy also share worship. Recently, coming together as a school family in collective worship played a significant role in enabling pupils, parents and members of staff to come to terms with the death of one of the teachers.

Planning for collective worship is thorough and supports pupils' spiritual progress very well. Themes are developed with great care so they explore Christian values and the messages in biblical and secular stories in ways which provoke reflective thinking. Purposeful monitoring and evaluation of worship takes place regularly and information about its impact is used to plan for future improvement. All teaching staff lead worship and this gives variety which the pupils appreciate. Pupils and adults actively engage in worship, particularly through the enthusiastic singing of worship songs and prayer. The singing is full and joyous and supports the Christian ethos very well.

### **The effectiveness of provision for Religious Education – EXCELLENT**

Religious Education (RE) is given a high priority within the school, making a valuable contribution to the Christian character of the school as well as reflecting the importance of recognising personal faith and belief in a church school. The school follows the Diocesan syllabus alongside the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. Taught by the headteacher, it effectively supports both the teaching of, and learning about the school's Christian values. This is a result of well-planned lessons that inspire pupils to think. The level of challenge the headteacher provides is ambitious. She challenges their thinking very skilfully, using RE lessons successfully to enable pupils to explore the school's Christian values through a wide variety of activities. 'Big Questions' are used very effectively to stimulate children's thinking and their ability to analyse and evaluate. The ability of pupils to discuss, question and debate is very well developed through RE, especially in upper key stage 2. For example, one pupil's response to the question, 'Is God the puppet master or do we have a choice?' was, 'People don't always do what God wants them to do. We make our own choices in life and God helps us to make them.' Pupils are not afraid to ask challenging questions of adult and peers. Older pupils say they enjoy debating big

questions because, 'It's fun. You don't argue, just discuss. Everyone's own ideas are just as valuable as someone else's.' For the past three years, RE teaching about the Old Testament and New Testament in years 5 and 6 has been supported effectively through Bible Explorer sessions which the pupils enjoy greatly, especially the role-play and drama.

Children enjoy and recognise the importance of RE in their lives and understand that it helps them to show an appreciation for others. The Multi Faith days which the school has organised at the request of pupils have made an outstanding impact on pupils' understanding of other major world faiths. Visitors from faiths other than Christianity such as Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism lead motivating, thought-provoking workshops which stimulate pupils' interest and deepen their understanding. Speaking with the inspector, pupils expressed a strong desire for more Multi Faith days so they can 'learn more about other faiths' in the future. These worthwhile opportunities, which use first hand experiences to develop pupils' awareness and understanding of other faith communities are extremely valuable. They know that the world has great diversity and that this should be respected. This in turn, impacts on the way that pupils treat visitors and others in the school community, their levels of tolerance and respect for others are outstanding. Parents feel that these experiences enable their children to respect diversity.

There are effective systems in place for monitoring and evaluation such as book scrutiny and learning walks, which have led to adaptations and improvements. The headteacher and governors keep abreast of current trends and changes through diocesan training. There is a good variety of resources which support the teaching of RE extremely well.

### **How distinctive is the school in its Christian Character? – EXCELLENT**

This school community promotes an ethos in which the development of the whole child is secured through a strong commitment to Christian values. These values are firmly embedded in the everyday life of the school and have a significant impact on the behaviour and attitudes of pupils. Displays throughout the school promote them well. Pupils know they are cared for and describe the school as being like a family. Pupils of all ages have a good knowledge and awareness of the school's Christian values such as kindness, respect, honesty, peace and love that underpin their life in school and talk confidently about them. Parents recognise and appreciate how important the school's focus on values is. For example, one noted that, 'Whether you believe or not, the values are important for all children to learn. It is a good starting point whatever they decide to believe when they grow up.' The effect on some pupils who are from non-church going families has been such that they have attended church regularly and been baptised into the Christian faith.

Pupils' understanding that they should treat others as they would like to be treated results in excellent behaviour and relationships throughout the school. There are very few instances of bullying. The introduction of a buddy system and, more recently training for older pupils in peer mediation, supports good behaviour and strong relationships. Pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning are excellent because they enjoy and appreciate the learning experiences they are given. They enjoy a broad and rich curriculum which is creative, stimulating and thought-provoking and which engages them not only academically but physically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually.

As a result of the focused Christian ethos and excellent pastoral care pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding is outstanding. The Multi Faith days which pupils enjoy as a part of their curriculum enable them to be aware of difference and diversity and ensure that they have a clear understanding of and respect for other faith communities.

Pupils say that adults listen to their views and respect them. Because the school's actions to improve pupils' chances are strongly rooted in distinctive Christian values, school staff make sure each pupil is known, valued and encouraged to succeed. Pupils appreciate that their efforts are acknowledged and celebrated and remark that they want to be in school – 'work is fun'. Consequently, attendance is above the national average. Parents, too, say that they feel part of the school's family community and this encourages them to become involved with school life.

The new school building supports the Christian character very effectively. At the entrance to the school are mosaics designed and made by the pupils which depict the Church in Wales cross and the school's Christian values. The commemorative stone was carved by a local stonemason and donated to the school by Clyro St. Michaels and All Angels Parochial Church Council. This celebrates the strong church links and a new chapter in Clyro School's long history extremely well. Christian signs and symbols within the

school reinforce the school's distinctiveness and support pupils' spiritual awareness and development effectively.

Relationships with the wider community, particularly with the local church and diocese are a significant strength. The school is at the heart of its community and participates in many ways, for example through its contributions for the parish magazine. Pupils attend and run stalls at the church Coffee mornings. Parents who are bell ringers at St. Michael's Church teach pupils to ring handbells. This is proving to be very popular with the pupils who have had opportunities to ring the hand bells in church services.

**How well does the school meet the needs of each learner and the whole school community?**

**EXCELLENT**

**How well does the school develop the pupils' personal qualities and achievement? EXCELLENT**

The wellbeing of pupils and staff has a very high priority. Most pupils across the school display a very positive approach to learning. Governors note that, 'pupils show enthusiasm in all they do.' Pupils speak very positively of how the teachers always want them to do their best and make learning stimulating and engaging - 'There's always something going on that is fun and interesting.' Early identification, intervention and liaison with specialist agencies ensure that nearly pupils reach expected levels of progress, including those who are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils with additional needs achieve their individual targets. Over the past five years, the school has maintained Standards Group 1 (green) in the School Categorisation System. This is because the distinctive Christian environment creates a learning culture in which all pupils feel secure and supported and encourages them to become confident learners. 'We can be open and say what we feel. It's good to be honest rather than keep things bottled up.' Pupils' personal spirituality is developing well, they talk freely about their beliefs and their importance. They are given opportunities to reflect in lessons as well as worship. For example, in a very effective lesson on the day of the inspection, pupils were considering if they had a choice in how they lived their lives. One girl remarked that, 'When we make decisions, we don't always make the right choices but this can be helpful because God helps us to learn from our mistakes.'

Behaviour is excellent throughout the school. Pupils conduct themselves responsibly and show high levels of respect for others. They are proud of their leadership roles in the school council, as sports ambassadors, playground buddies, peer mentors, Criw Cymraeg and Digital leaders and take these responsibilities seriously. Year 6 pupils have been trained as Dementia Friends by the Brecon Alzheimer's Society and visit the HayDay Dementia Café at Clyro Village Hall. They show great tolerance and understanding for those who need support and display care, kindness and empathy with Dementia members. One girl remarked that having to learn to speak with different people had given her confidence. Pupils' achievements both large and small are celebrated in a weekly assembly which the pupils say they value.

**How inclusive is the School as a Church School? EXCELLENT**

The school is inclusive of all learners. Those pupils with additional needs are offered effective support and guidance which meets their needs successfully. Pupils say, 'we look out for each other and are kind to one another.' This caring ethos is recognised by parents who say the school is 'family orientated and that pupils care for each other across year groups.' Pupils of all ages understand the need to be welcoming regardless of the background of other people and are seen to put this into practise when new pupils start at the school.

Running the school's own fruit and vegetable co-operative scheme by selling bags of fruit, vegetables and salad to parents, staff and the members of the community boosts pupils' self-esteem and confidence. It enables pupils to learn useful life skills such as taking and placing orders, telephoning orders through, collecting money and distributing food bags.

Pupils show an awareness of the needs of others. They choose to raise money for a range of charities because they understand that giving to others is one of the ways in which the Christian values which they live out can benefit others. The school council and older pupils plan fundraising activities to support a number of different charities such as Brecon Foodbank, Operation Christmas Child, Christian Aid, Christian Society, Jeans for Genes, Children in Need, Macmillan Cancer care and Dementia Friends. One boy remarked that, 'It's important that everyone is treated equally and fairly in the world, that's why

Fairtrade is so important.' Spiritual development is clearly evident, for example, in the confidence of the pupils to express their thoughts clearly.

### **How well is the school led and managed as a Church School? EXCELLENT**

The headteacher is a strong Christian role model and shares her vision successfully with stakeholders. Her Christian commitment and ambition for each pupil, and for the school to succeed are evident in all aspects of her leadership. For example, this is apparent in the way in which all pupils from an early age are encouraged and enabled to be independent learners, with a freedom and creativity of thought and opinion. Pupils are supported and challenged to stretch themselves and to achieve highly in all areas, not just academically.

Parents say that the headteacher is approachable and listens to them. They value being part of the school and speak very highly of their children's teachers. They feel their views are taken seriously and are swiftly acted upon. Parents appreciate the dedicated work of staff in supporting their children's personal and spiritual development as well as their academic success.

Governors support and challenge the headteacher effectively. Through their monitoring they know the school well. As a result of accurate self-evaluation, school leaders have a good understanding of how to continue to develop the school as a church school. Action plans for RE and worship are included in the school's improvement planning and ways forward are discussed at governors' meetings.

There is a particularly strong and valuable partnership with the local church. The vicar is a much-loved friend to the community, providing pastoral support and leading collective worship. Both church and school benefit from the partnership. For example, worship is enriched, pupils benefit from classroom and reading support, messy church activities, the community raises funds for the school and pupils organise stalls and events to raise funds for the church and charities. There are also strong productive partnerships with the diocese and the local community. The end of term services are very well supported by parents and the community. One parent remarked that the service 'is very special, it brings everyone together.'

RE and collective worship are led with enthusiasm and there is a genuine desire to find ways to improve still further. The school has benefitted from support from the diocese which is helping leaders to continue to develop the school as a church school. Although governors are supportive of the professional development of all staff in school, there have been few opportunities for church school leadership and development training in the local area. The school works very effectively with other church schools locally to further improve the way they monitor and evaluate collective worship and the teaching of RE and world religions.

The arrangements for RE and collective worship fully meet the statutory requirements.

<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 (where inspected)</b>	<b>n/a</b>

*I would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils of  
Clyro Church in Wales VC Primary School for their welcome and cooperation.*

*Mrs Kath Thomas*

## Parents' Questionnaire - Holiadur Rhieni

There were 22 responses

	YES	NO
Are you aware that this is a church school?	22	0
Do you believe that the school is a place which is built upon clear Christian values?	22	0
This is a Church School, that is a school with a Christian character. Was this fact important when you were choosing a school for your child/children?	11	11

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The school has a distinctive Christian character	15	6	1	0	0
The school's distinctive Christian character makes a significant contribution to pupils' education	10	8	3	0	1
Pupils find collective worship a valuable experience	10	8	3	0	1
The school has effective links with the local church and other faith communities	18	4	0	0	0
The school keeps parents well informed about the work that pupils do in Religious Education	13	3	6	0	0
The school encourages pupils to care for God's Creation (the environment) as well as for themselves	14	6	1	0	0
The school encourages pupils to consider people in other countries, and how they can assist them, when help is required	13	9	0	0	0
The school ensures links are made with the local community	18	3	0	1	0