



YR EGLWYS  
YNG NGHYMRU



THE CHURCH  
IN WALES

## Gwella Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

Knighton Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Ludlow Road, Knighton, Powys, LD7 1HP

Diocese: Swansea and Brecon

Local authority: Powys

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

Date of last inspection: June 2014

School's unique reference number: 6663035

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Strong

Inspector's name and number: Kathryn Thomas



### School context

Knighton Voluntary Controlled Church in Wales Primary School is situated in Knighton in Powys. There are 203 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years, including 13 part-time nursery pupils. There are seven classes in the school, four of which are mixed-age classes. The school has an area resource base specialist centre. Pupils who attend the resource provision have a wide range of additional needs. Around 6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is well below the national average of 18%. The school identifies around 18% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is below the national average of 21%. Very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. The headteacher took up her post in 2015. The school's previous inspection was in June 2014.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Knighton as a Church in Wales school are GOOD

#### Established strengths

- The Christian character and values of the school have a significant impact on the wellbeing and spiritual, moral and social development of all learners
- Pupils' understanding of the school's values and how they impact on their daily lives and the lives of others
- Relationships within the school are embedded in the school's Christian ethos which leads to a very high standard of pupil behaviour
- The strength of pupil leadership and the depth of pupils' involvement in school life ensures they promote the importance of Christian values in what happens in school

#### Focus for development

- To make Christian Distinctiveness an agenda item in regular governor meetings and for the headteacher to update the Governing Body termly on collective worship and RE
- Enhance opportunities for pupils to develop a deeper understanding of other faiths
- Enhance opportunities for further prayer and reflection by putting pupils' existing plans into action for setting up a quiet area in the school grounds as a 'peaceful and spiritual garden'

### 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 is GOOD**

Collective worship is an important part of every day and is enjoyed as a time of community, celebration and thanks. It is varied and engaging, relevant to the lives of pupils and often inspires them. For example, they act with compassion by supporting charities and relate Christian values to their behaviour choices. A great favourite of pupils is 'Bob the Snail' who comes to collective worship with his friend, the local vicar. Bob makes some very unwise choices in his life so pupils enjoy helping him to learn how to make 'good choices'. One pupil commented that, 'Good choices are important but Jesus cares for us even if we make bad choices.'

The partnership with the local church and other local Christians enriches worship. The school's values are explored during worship and related to examples from the Bible. Acts of worship underpin the strong sense of belonging to a caring community. The time to come together as a whole school, to celebrate, to hear Bible readings, to sing, to learn about the world and to express thoughts in prayer is valued by all ages. A candle is lit at the beginning of worship. As one pupil said, 'It reminds us that God is always with us.' The singing is full and joyful and supports the Christian ethos well.

Although not all staff lead worship, the variety of visitors leading worship provides pupils with a range of worship experiences and styles. It also helps them to see Christian faith in action as they build relationships with partners. Worship leaders include the headteacher, the vicar and Open the Book volunteers. The pupils particularly enjoy acting and reading the bible stories they dramatise. At one pupil's suggestion, the Open the Book stories are now delivered in chronological order, making more sense for the pupils, particularly in the season of Advent.

Children's leadership of collective worship is a significant strength. Pupils in the Worship Council (Year 2 – Year 6) decide on the Christian values for the year, organise them per half-term and lead whole school worship weekly, focusing on the current value and reading prayers written by themselves or others. Most pupils appreciate the variety of worship offered which develops their spirituality effectively. They are developing a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and, as they move through the school, are able to talk about their beliefs in an increasingly mature way.

Governors express pride in the way worship affirms the church foundation. Children appreciate visiting the parish church for services and for curriculum work in RE. One pupil commented that, 'It's good in church because God can see us better', another that church 'is the best place to pray'. Parents say they enjoy attending worship in school and special celebrations such as Harvest and Christmas in St Edward's Church. Worthwhile events run by members of the local church, such as the 'Easter Experience', are seen as fun by the children and contribute to their sound understanding of different festivals. Although children understand that Christianity is a world-wide faith, worship material from the world-wide church is not at present used in worship. Self-evaluation plays an effective role in moving worship forward. A range of evaluation strategies, involving the Worship Council, staff and governors, feeds into development planning.

### **The effectiveness of provision for Religious Education is GOOD**

Religious Education (RE) is given a high priority within the school. It makes a valuable contribution to the Christian character of the school and enables many pupils to have a good understanding of the relevance of RE to their own lives and the lives of others.

The school follows the 'Understanding Christianity' resource. The subject is taught in a creative and interactive way with an emphasis on investigating religious concepts and exploring Christian values. Teachers provide exciting enquiry opportunities and make effective use of 'Big Questions' and philosophy for children which deepen pupils' theological understanding. Discussion, questioning and debate is developing well through RE. As a result, pupils are developing an increasingly secure knowledge of Christianity and other faiths, although the school has identified a need to develop pupils' first-hand experience of other faiths.

The importance of RE in the life of the school is demonstrated by the high priority it is accorded as a core subject. The subject coordinator is enthusiastic and supportive and leads by example. Lessons meet the needs of all by using varied and differentiated activities which engage pupils, promote their

enjoyment and develop essential knowledge and skills. RE supports pupils' understanding of a range of beliefs and world faiths and the school's Christian character well. For example, parents say how their children are fascinated by the ten incarnations of Vishnu. Pupils have great respect for all people, regardless of their differences, and are enthusiastic about exploring different religions and cultures. Those of different faith or no-faith are equally respected and valued. Children are clear how the school's values and their learning through RE helps them understand how to treat other people whatever their differences or disagreements. As such, RE makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all ages.

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

The Christian character is evident in creative, interesting displays and artefacts around the school, with few opportunities being missed to inspire and develop the pupils' enquiring minds. Christian values provide a firm foundation for all aspects of school life. They create a safe, happy and loving ethos enabling all children to flourish as unique individuals. Governors say that, 'the ethos is lived, you can breathe it.' All members of the school family recognise and celebrate the central place of Christian values at the heart of the life of the community. For example, one parent commented that the school, 'instills the correct values in children. As a church school it is the perfect place to introduce these values and religion to a child'. Relationships between children and adults are very good. Pupils understand the importance of these values and relate them to their relationships, behaviour choices and compassionate support for those in need.

The school rules, 'Kind actions, Kind Words' are lived out by pupils and staff on a daily basis. Peer mentoring and reconciliation through the Guardian Angels and emotion coaching approaches are highly valued by pupils of all ages and are key to creating highly positive relationships. Incidents of unkind behaviour and bullying have decreased markedly since they were introduced and fallings out on the yard are now dealt with primarily by pupil 'emotion coaches'. Parents appreciate the high level of care that pupils display for each other, 'They are always looking out for one another.' Pupils in the main school show a caring attitude towards those in the Resource Based Specialist Centre. Older pupils attribute the school's Christian character to the success of the behaviour approaches. They refer to the gospels as being full of good news and relate them to their Guardian Angel approach. A year 6 boy remarked that, 'The gospels help us understand that we can resolve problems and find ways of making an enemy into a friend.' As a result, learners are kind and courteous, respectful of others and behave very well.

The close and productive ties with the local church are highly valued and support the Christian character of the school very well. They are seen by the vicar as 'a precious link' which must be nurtured. She believes the pupils understand that the church is for them and engages with a wide range of activities such as making a bug hotel in the church graveyard to encourage this.

### **How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? EXCELLENT**

The school's Christian values influence and shape the ways in which all members of the school community are supported and shown mutual respect. Pupils are proud of their school and feel safe and valued by their peers and the staff that care for them. Teachers and experienced, well-trained teaching assistants know the children very well and work tirelessly to ensure all succeed. They provide extra support to nurture and engage vulnerable children and their families in this inclusive community. In lessons, pupils have opportunities to suggest ideas for learning activities within their topics and as such, most display a very positive approach to learning. Nearly all children, including those with special educational needs, achieve well due to the supportive and caring ethos and personal relationships at all levels are highly effective. One parents wrote, 'The school is very good at promoting love, which I consider to be the key teaching of Jesus.'

Members of the local community provide effective support for pupils. A parent worked with older pupils to use the Minecraft programme to create a nativity scene, which they thoroughly enjoyed and which boosted their ICT skills very effectively. A retired local Baptist minister takes problem-solving maths sessions for more able pupils in Years 3 and 4 maths and leads a weekly social-stories club. The

headteacher says that he, 'provides an inspiring example to our children in the celebration of 'life in all its fullness'.'

The headteacher and her staff model a Christian approach to school life and reward children for living out their Christian values. Children relate to each other with understanding and compassion. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 write and act out the story of Rama and Sita with shadow puppets for those in Years 1 and 2. When studying the second world war, pupils write letters as real-life characters to ask forgiveness for the hurt and pain they have caused. One boy in Year 6 speaks about how vital it is to be tolerant and forgiving of others – 'It's important to put ourselves in their shoes and show empathy towards them.'

All pupils take on leadership roles as sports ambassadors, Emotion coaches, Guardian Angels and Digital Leaders or members of the Worship Council, Eco Council, Friendship Council and Criw Cymraeg. They take these responsibilities very seriously and their work has led to improvements within the school such as changes to the way Open the Book is delivered during the year. As a result, most pupils are self-confident and display good levels of self-esteem. Those pupils who have been involved with the Dementia Friendly Town and Makaton Awareness projects have an increased awareness of issues outside of their own experiences. They show great tolerance and understanding for those who need support and display care and kindness. For example, Makaton is used in all acts of collective worship.

Pupils are given opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities within the wider school community. For example, nearly all pupils in key stage 2 demonstrate effective entrepreneurial skills by participating in the annual enterprise week and work-related activities. Working within Arts Council Wales Creative Schools project, older pupils produce films and animations and perform 'The Song of Children's Rights' with schools in England. Pupils are becoming more aware about how humans treat the world we live in. Through their eco work the school has achieved the Platinum Eco award. Many pupils participate in campaigns to improve their community such as planting wild flowers and going on a climate change march.

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

The school is a 'Relationships First' community where the Christian character and Christian values enable all members of the school community to understand that everyone is redeemable – staff 'do not give up on anyone.' There is appreciation for what each person brings to the extended family of the school. Wellbeing is a priority and members of staff go the extra mile in caring for pupils. The school is inclusive of all learners and those with additional needs are given effective support and guidance which allow them to meet their individual targets well. Pupils in the resource provision are developing social awareness and an increased understanding of managing emotions, fairness and respect for others successfully. During a 'listening to learners' session, which formed evidence for the review of Specialist Centres in Powys, Year 4 pupils described how there was no such thing as 'Centre' pupils. They were just their friends and classmates who had a bit of extra help during the day. Parents comment positively on the strength of wellbeing within the school. One said, 'Pupils look out for others, not just themselves.' Another remarked that, 'They have a good awareness of others, by doing the little things.' Pupils are thoughtful and are mindful of the needs of others. During the Ash Wednesday service, pupils could decide for themselves whether they wanted an ash cross on their foreheads. One boy in year 6 told the vicar that, 'Although I'm not a Christian, I'd like to have the ash cross because my friends are.'

As they get older many older pupils have a growing understanding of how the church is inclusive and can play an important role in their lives. For example, one boy in Year 6 says, 'I enjoy visiting the church. I feel safe there and welcome. It's a place where people are baptized and there are areas for you to pray and worship. The church is special because it accepts anyone.'

The school recognises that pupils' views and opinions are important and gives them ample opportunities to share these through the many pupil voice groups. Pupils are helped to grow in their social understanding, awareness and respect for others through Christian action in raising money for various local and international charities. For example, pupils collect items for Knighton Food Bank, the Welsh Air Ambulance, the Royal British Legion, Comic Relief and Sports Relief.

**How effective is the leadership and management of the school as a Church School? GOOD**

The distinctiveness of the school as a church school has been firmly established by the headteacher who has an unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of pupils and staff. She, along with the school leaders, articulate and promote a vision of inclusivity and Christian values which has an extremely positive impact on the school community.

Good relationships are the hallmark of this school; there is an infectious sense of happiness. Governors appreciate the way the school's Christian values and spirituality make a difference to the school's approach to relationships and behaviour. They say that behaviour has improved due to the focus on these values and any issues between pupils are resolved in a respectful way with pupils showing tolerance and generosity towards each other. Partnerships with parents, the local church and the community are of mutual benefit. Parents are warmly welcomed into school and regularly attend special events including worship. Parents comment positively that the school's values are promoted throughout the school. The pre-inspection questionnaire raises no particular concerns, comments from parents are overwhelmingly positive, they feel that the school prepares children well for life.

Links with the local church, St. Edward's, are well established and very strong. The vicar makes an extremely valuable contribution to the life of the school through her commitment and support for worship and RE lessons. Members of support staff feel that their views are valued and their opinions are taken into account. Pupils enjoy attending church for key events in the church calendar, services and also as a resource to support RE lessons. Events in church are supported well by parents and the local community and this ensures a 'community spirit' between the school, the church and the local community.

The Governing Body has a clear understanding of the purpose of a Church in Wales School. Governors contribute well to the life of the school and are committed to working as part of the school team. The school carries out regular monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and RE, sometimes alongside pupils. However, the school's Christian distinctiveness and how to continue to develop the school as a church school is given less focus.

The school has benefitted from a range of professional development opportunities provided by the Diocese which is helping to support leaders of RE and collective worship. The RE coordinator is a strong and capable leader who has a genuine desire to secure further improvements. The school works effectively with other church schools locally to receive training and share good practice. All teachers have received training in delivering the Understanding Christianity resource, developing philosophy for children and in using Big Questions in RE. Development issues from the previous inspection have been met well. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet the statutory requirements

**The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship**

**Y/N**

*I would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils of Knighton V.C Primary School for their welcome and cooperation.  
Mrs Kath Thomas*

