

**Benington C of E Primary School (VC)**

**Walkern Road, Benington, Stevenage SG2 7LP**

**Diocese: St Albans**

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Date of last inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008

School's unique reference number: 117389

Headteacher : Mrs Jenny Munns

Inspector's name and number: Lindsay Fraser (107)

**School context**

This school is smaller than average and pupils are taught in five mixed-age classes. Almost all pupils are White British and come from a range of social backgrounds. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language and the number of children with disabilities and special needs is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. Approximately half the pupils come from the village of Benington and half the pupils travel from surrounding villages and the local town.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Benington C of E Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The school mission statement 'Inspiring pupils to reach their full potential in our Christian environment of trust, respect and care for all' is demonstrated consistently throughout the school. Adult role models, aspirational display and the use of Christian symbols together ooze Christian love, hope and compassion. Value is given to listening to each child, allowing each one to express their feelings and anxieties in a safe and secure environment, to take risks in the learning and to achieve their potential.

**Established strengths**

- The outstanding leadership of the Headteacher and Senior Teacher in establishing, developing and promoting the Christian vision.
- The excellent staff role models who are held in high regard by the whole school community.
- The pastoral care provided for pupils in times of need.
- The supportive and active role taken by the governing body

**Focus for development**

- To further enhance the quality of Collective Worship through pupil led worship groups.
- To enable pupils to take a more active part in evaluating the impact of Collective Worship.
- To take more opportunities to share and celebrate the school's outstanding Christian Character.

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

Excellent relationships amongst staff and pupils are evident throughout the school. Pupils respect the staff and say that they want to please them and make them proud. The ethos of trust enables pupils to take risks, both in their learning and in expressing their feelings, their beliefs and their opinions. Behaviour is excellent both in classrooms and in the playground. Mrs 'P' is an extremely valuable human resource for all pupils and parents too. Pupils are confident that if they have a problem they will be able to discuss this with Mrs 'P' who will listen carefully, take their views seriously and mediate or enable others to mediate when necessary. Nurture groups, bereavement support and counselling are also provided by Mrs

'P' who works in conjunction with a counsellor and family worker to listen, value and enable pupils to develop strategies to manage difficult situations, based on Christian love. Following the role models of the adults pupils also provide mutual support for each other and many examples could be seen of pupils valuing the qualities of others, supporting others in their learning and caring about those who might feel left out. Pupils are also keen to support those further afield, including the support of a child and a school in Kenya. Pupils are very aware of the commitment which the staff give to the school and were keen to identify the extra voluntary responsibilities taken on by staff. Religious Education and all other areas of the curriculum make an excellent contribution to Social, Moral, Spiritual and Moral development, based on a very comprehensive policy. The headteacher, through her monitoring of planning, can speak confidently of this coverage. On the day of the inspection Years 5 and 6 were involved in a very exciting and engaging game based on Fairtrade as part of their topic on Africa. This enabled pupils to experience at first hand the concept of social injustice, the impact of climate and the challenges of finance on those in developing countries. Key Stage 1 pupils were also involved in a topic on food which contributed to their understanding of other cultures, moral choices and healthy life styles. Reception pupils enjoy a curriculum rich in its Christian ethos and values. They had earlier experienced the journey of Moses and his people through the desert by their role play within the school grounds. The Christian ethos is well supported by the environment rich in motivational and aspirational displays, displays based on Christian festivals and valuing pupils' achievements. Reflection is becoming a very rich aspect of the pupils' experience, in Collective Worship and in their lesson time. Pupils appreciate this time and value the opportunity to think about their learning, their behaviour and their feelings. Some pupils would like even more time to reflect and to have a special room in which to do so.

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

The impact of Collective Worship on pupils is good. In the act of Collective Worship observed during the inspection there was an atmosphere of calm, peace and respectfulness. Particularly noticeable were the relationships amongst staff and pupils with staff contributing and participating as much as the pupils. Pupils showed great insight into the meaning of the crucifixion and resurrection. They were keen to offer their opinions and ideas and pupils later discussed how they appreciated and enjoyed listening to the views of others. Singing is excellent, enhanced by the use of a piano and cajon accompaniment. Pupils of different ages were able to read the prayers and younger pupils were able to contribute through the waving of palm leaves. Writing prayers for Collective Worship and other events is a popular activity amongst the pupils. Pupils say that they would like a box to put in their thoughts, their ideas and their learning from Collective Worship. Planning and delivering Collective Worship is an area to consider for the older pupils as they have the self- confidence, language skills and listening ability to contribute in this way. Pupils take it in turn to record the inclusion of reflection and other aspects expected in Collective Worship and now could contribute to the future development of Collective Worship by sharing their thoughts with staff and governors. The pupils enjoy and appreciate their services held in St Peter's Church with one of the younger pupils stating, 'Church is one of the most special places to go and think'. Services held by the school in the church are well attended by parents. The choir also participates in other services in the church such as Mothering Sunday and Harvest Festival.

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

The Headteacher and Senior Teacher provide excellent leadership through their Christian vision and application of this vision, which is understood and shared by both staff and pupils. The governing body are committed to the Christian ethos of the school and governors have been supportive of the developments since the last inspection including the use of reflection, which has now become an embedded part of governing body meetings. They have supported the acquisition of artefacts and resources to support the teaching and learning of other faiths, the visits made by those of other faiths to the school and have now committed a considerable budget to enabling all pupils to experience visits to places of worship of other faiths. Foundation Governors have been involved in evaluating Collective Worship in a formal and informal manner and understand that visits would benefit from involving pupils more in their evaluations. Whilst governors have a good understanding of the Distinctive Christian Character of the school they are aware that further training in this area will contribute to the

quality of their evaluations. A successful parent council is well established, ensuring good communication between the school and parents and ensuring that issues are aired, discussed and, where appropriate, acted upon. The excellent partnership between the school and the church continues to grow due to the commitment and dedication of members of the church. Many pupils attend the Saturday Club and services and events are always advertised by the school. Opportunities are sometimes missed to celebrate the school's outstanding Christian Character such as on the school's website and in newsletters.

SIAS report March 2013, Benington VC Primary School, Walkern Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 7LP