



Balcombe CE Primary School

Diocese of Chichester

Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Inspection Report



Date of inspection:	23 June 2010
Name of inspector:	Allison Goodfellow
NS inspector's number:	504
School address:	London Road Balcombe West Sussex RH17 6HS
Unique reference number:	126006
Status:	Voluntary Controlled
Number on roll:	129
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
LA:	West Sussex
Name of chair of governors:	Jeff Thompson
Name of headteacher:	Wendy Littlefair
Date of previous inspection:	October 2007

The inspection of denominational education and collective worship in the school was carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Description of the school

Balcombe CE Primary School is a small rural school serving the prosperous village of Balcombe. Many pupils live in the village but about a third of pupils travel from Crawley, Haywards Heath and surrounding villages.

The current headteacher was appointed in 2009. Since then, there have been many new appointments, including the Chair of Governors, Premises Manager and Bursar, and several staff have changed classes or key stage. Most classes contain two year groups. 8% of pupils are on the Register of Special Educational Needs. 12% of the pupils are from black or ethnic minority backgrounds. The incidence of free school meals is low – 2%.

Part of the school accommodation is Victorian with more recent split-level additions that have been sensitively integrated with the older parts of the school and the gradient of the outside play areas and school field. The school field is not owned by the school.

Summary judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Balcombe CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good. The recent appointment of the headteacher and changes to the governing body and senior leadership team has invigorated the school. Much has already been done and exciting plans lie ahead. Outstanding relationships with parents and links with the parish church significantly enhance provision and make pupils and staff feel well supported by the community.

The school has successfully addressed the areas for further action identified in the last inspection.

Grade: 2

Established strengths

- the Christian vision of the headteacher, governors and senior leadership team
- the Christian ethos of the school through which all pupils are known well, given time to develop their special talents - and 'shine'
- the commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to enhancing the distinctiveness of the school as a church school
- the positive efforts made by the headteacher and senior staff to ensure that relationships with parents are based on mutual trust and, as a result, are outstanding
- the strong, positive links with the parish church

Focus for Development

- Enhance the school environment to ensure it makes a more significant contribution to spiritual development
- As policies and plans are updated, include statements that reflect the Christian context of the school

The school meets the statutory requirement for Collective Worship	Yes
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The school, through its distinctive Christian character is good at meeting the needs of all its learners.

All pupils benefit from the strong ethos of inclusion that permeates the school. Older pupils regularly support the younger pupils, extending their play and developing their social skills. Pastoral care and concern for the well-being of all pupils is very good. As a result, they feel valued and safe and their behaviour is excellent.

The school has a strongly developed transition programme into school, including home visits, which enables staff to quickly know the children and their families. These important relationships, which arise from clearly stated Christian values, are seen by stakeholders as fundamental to the success of the school. Parents appreciate the consequent ease of access to staff; they are very proud of the school. One parent said, 'we know how lucky we are!'

The rich curriculum opportunities exemplified through Religious Education (RE) and themes within Personal, Social, Health and Cultural Education (PSHCE), further developed in Collective Worship, enliven learning to the evident enjoyment of the pupils. However, opportunities to celebrate RE and spirituality in displays, special areas inside and outside the school, or the use of symbols around the school, are under-developed.

The well thought out curriculum, linked to worship and RE, ensures respect for those with Christian faith, other faith or none and good systems track individual progress. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good; their biblical knowledge is good and they talk about their faith with confidence.

Grade: 2

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good.

Worship occupies an important place in the life of the school. Whole school Collective Worship, including achievement assemblies, and class worship all form part of the weekly pattern. Parents are invited to achievement assemblies and many attend. Several parents commented that their pupils tell them about the happenings in worship and that this provokes family discussion at home.

Well planned worship themes arise from Christian values. Consequently, worship is recognisably Christian, but not strongly Anglican. The school is sensitive to the beliefs of those with other faiths, and none. As a result, all pupils take part in worship and describe worship as enjoyable and interesting. The pupils were keen to share their enjoyment of Worship and were very clear about what they like. One pupil said '... [worship] leads you all through the day'. The pupils participate eagerly and singing is loud and tuneful. They are respectful during prayers and reflect with reverence during the special quiet moments included in some acts of worship. Excellent use is made of digital technology, including video and up to date music, to capture the interest of the pupils. This recent investment in interactive resources and a worship focus, including a handcrafted cross made by a parent, has been funded by the PTA which shows that Collective Worship is important to parents, too.

Good systems, involving governors and staff, are developing to monitor the pupils' responses to worship and clear evidence is being kept of pupil views to inform current planning and future developments.

There are outstanding links with the local parish church. The priest-in-charge is frequently in school to lead worship or work in classrooms and is well known to the pupils. As a result, a new church service has arisen from requests from parents and the children for a child focused Sunday worship.

Grade: 2

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

The leadership and management of this church school are good. The quality of leadership of the headteacher, who is also the RE subject leader, senior staff and governors contributes significantly to the success of the school as a church school. The head-teacher, senior leadership team and governors are developing a clear, Christian vision for the school. This is being demonstrated through the development of a vibrant learning environment, a strong ethos of pastoral care and a commitment to inclusion. All of these arise from Christian values and shared school aims, which are evident to all who visit or attend the school. As a result of the positive ethos of Christian care, and a commitment to their well-being, pupils and staff feel valued and relationships are good. Governors know the school well and play an important role in supporting and challenging the school's ethos and values. Tasks are shared between governors and the leadership team so that all feel involved and knowledgeable about school related matters; all contributions are valued. Therefore, leadership is strategic and forward-looking.

The school actively seeks the views of stakeholders. Communication with parents is good. The appointment of the current headteacher, in September 2009 and recent changes to the governing body and the senior leadership team have resulted in an energy that is driving the evaluation of existing practice and developing challenging ideas for the future. Balcombe Primary School is an exciting place in which to work!

The school has excellent links with the community, becoming involved in village life whenever possible. Parental support for the school is strong; the PTA is particularly active. Parents comment that the school has a special quality that enables all pupils to flourish.

Grade: 2