



YR EGLWYS
YNG NGHYMRU



THE CHURCH
IN WALES

Gwella Inspection of Church in Wales Schools Report

Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Allt yr Efail, Llandegla, Denbighshire, LL11 3AW

Diocese: St. Asaph
Local authority: Denbighshire
Dates of inspection: 13th November 2019
Date of last inspection: June 2015
School's unique reference number: 6702105
Headteacher: Mr Huw Rowlands
Inspector's name and number: Kathryn Thomas



School context

Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl is a Voluntary Controlled school situated in the village of Llandegla. It has 50 pupils on roll, including 6 who attend the Nursery part-time. Although most pupils live within the catchment area the school attracts pupils from beyond the catchment. Pupils are taught by two full time and one part time teacher, in two mixed age classes. The three-year rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 6%, which is significantly below the average for Wales (21%). Most pupils are of white British ethnicity and very few pupils speak Welsh at home. The school has identified around 20% of pupils as having special educational needs. This is close to the national average of 21%. No pupils have a statement of special educational need.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church in Wales school are GOOD

The impact of the school's distinctive Christian ethos is good because the school's core values are underpinned by Christian teaching and make a difference to important aspects of the life of the school. Christian character is particularly evident in the positive relationships that exist between pupils and staff and plays an important part in pupils' personal development. Pupils feel part of a welcoming and supportive Christian family.

Established strengths

- Dyffryn Iâl is a caring school community where Christian values are deeply embedded in each aspect of school life and underpin the life and work of the school.
- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. Regularly pupil led, it provides excellent opportunities for personal and spiritual reflection and because of this, pupils have extremely positive attitudes to worship.
- The core Christian values of respect, wisdom and friendship impact positively on teaching and learning so that pupils' engagement in learning is high. This results in pupils having very positive approaches to their learning.

Focus for development

- Fulfil school leaders' plans to revisit the school's mission and vision statements, in partnership with all stakeholders, ensuring the biblical root of these values and their relevance to life today are understood throughout the school community.
- Explore ways in which the Christian faith is lived out in different cultures so that pupils develop an increasing understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.
- To ensure the school provides greater opportunities for the development of staff as leaders of church schools.

The prospects for Improvement in the future are GOOD

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

The contribution of Religious Education to the Christian Character of the school is GOOD

At Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl every child is nurtured and valued within an environment that places emphasis on these values and which shapes the approach to personal and academic development. All stakeholders describe the school as a family. The school's Christian ethos based on Christian values of friendship, respect and wisdom, encourages the positive relationships that exist between pupils and staff. Pupils' behaviour is very good. They get on well together, for example, parents remark how well older pupils take care of younger ones. The local vicar and a member of the area ministry team lead a service in St Tecla's church each Friday and support pupils' work in RE during the year. Pupils speak positively of how the teachers always want them to do their best and make learning interesting. This is linked clearly to the Christian values which are displayed around the school and known by all. Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl is fully inclusive of those of the Christian faith, other faiths and none. Many pupils can discuss Christian values and how they influence their life in school and at home maturely. They can relate values to bible stories and the teachings of Jesus. For example, a year 6 girl explains that the meaning of the parable of the wise man who built his house on rock is that Jesus will give us firm foundations to build our lives on.

The Christian character of the school has a beneficial effect on pupils' achievement. Attendance is high because pupils want to come to school and in surveys, nearly all pupils show high rates of satisfaction regarding their life and work in school. The school encourages a good attitude to learning and promotes pupils' high self-esteem, through carefully considering the needs of the individual child. Support for pupils with special educational needs is effective, allowing them to meet or exceed their own personal targets. School performance data demonstrates the good progress which nearly all pupils make as they move through the school.

Religious Education (RE) has a positive impact on the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and in the important attitudes of tolerance and respect that they acquire. It supports children's understanding of Christian values and makes an effective contribution to cultural development through the study of different faiths. In KS2 are confident in articulating their knowledge and ideas about Christianity and in comparing it with a range of world faiths. One child said, 'We should tolerate other people's beliefs and show respect for them.' Pupils' understanding is greatly enhanced through working with church volunteers, for example, on workstations about the stations of the cross or Christian festivals. However, pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is less well-developed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is EXCELLENT

Collective worship plays a central role in the life of the school. It is thoughtfully planned to link to the church calendar and also acknowledges significant dates and celebrations of other world faiths. All members of the school community have the opportunity to take part in reflection, singing and prayer and to engage with Bible stories. Children recognise the relevance of collective worship and the difference it makes to their lives. A Year 6 girl comments that, 'Collective worship is a time when we can be calm and to reflect on God's love.' A simple act of lighting a candle reminds everyone present that Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world,' so that children can reflect on ways in which they too can be lights in the world by their actions. A Year 3 girl remarks that, 'The candle helps me focus on Jesus because he is the light of the world and shows us the way to live.'

Links with local churches are very strong. Local clergy and other members of St Tecla's and Bryneglwys Churches make an extremely valuable contribution to the life of the school through their commitment and support through worship and supporting RE. The use of the churches for key events in the church calendar, school plays and community focused events are good examples of purposeful links between the two communities. These events are supported very well by parents and the local community and therefore ensure a 'community spirit' between the school, the churches and the local community. The vicar and a member of the area missionary team lead a weekly service for the pupils in St Tecla's Church local church. Major festivals in the Christian year such as Harvest are also celebrated in the church with parents and members of the community while Easter is celebrated at Bryneglwys Church. Parents and pupils see this as symbolising the inclusive ethos of both the school and the church. These experiences enable all members of the school community to develop a deep spiritual connection to events in the church's year.

All teaching staff lead worship and this gives variety which the pupils appreciate. Pupils are engaged and sing enthusiastically in worship. Pupils regularly plan and lead worship independently. They describe how leading worship not only helps them to grow in confidence as leaders, but also enables them to better understand the messages of the Bible. They use the 'window, mirror, door' approach maturely to help members of the school congregation learn, to give them time to reflect on what they have learned and lastly to think about what they can do in their lives to put the learning into practice. The quality of pupils' input into worship is a significant strength and is one of the reasons collective worship is excellent. Worship creates a good learning environment through its moral messages which influence pupils' actions, attitudes and behaviour. This strengthens the knowledge and application of the values and makes them 'real' to the school community. Pupils have a positive attitude to worship because it relates to their understanding of Christian values. Time is also allocated in collective worship to share and celebrate individual talent and achievement. The development of learners as leaders of worship was a focus for development from the previous inspection, it has been addressed extremely well.

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

Senior leaders and governors articulate a vision based on Christian values which has a positive impact on all aspects of school life. They have a good understanding of the school's performance and collective worship since there are effective monitoring and evaluation strategies in place, thus addressing one of the recommendations from the last inspection. Evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness is less well established. The school's vision and mission statements need more clarity in order to communicate and draw inspiration from the distinguishing elements of the school's Christian foundation. That leaders and governors have recognised this is proof of the culture of challenge and support for improvement which exists in the school.

The ethos within the school is one where pupils and staff feel secure and cared for. Relationships throughout the school are very strong and supportive. All the staff aim to give pupils the best education they can, both spiritually and academically. Children love going to school and, from a very young age, its Christian character has a strong impact on achievement in many areas including confidence and social and communication skills. Teachers and Teaching Assistants feel valued and very much part of the school team. The leader of RE and collective worship is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and ensures that both are approached through the meaningful application of the values - there is a genuine desire to 'get it right' for the pupils. The arrangements for RE and collective worship fully meet the statutory requirements. Staff and governors have benefitted from attending Diocesan training events. However, there is currently no system in place for succession planning, for example, to support staff to prepare for future leadership roles within a Church school setting.

Parents are very happy with the school and make comments which support its Christian aims such as 'it is a nurturing school where the kindness shines through' and, 'the strong Christian values provide a structure and moral guidance which we appreciate.' The good relationships developed between all members of the school community underpin its Christian character and parents value the open-door approach. The pre-inspection questionnaire raised few concerns, comments from parents were overwhelmingly positive. Parents feel that the school prepared children well for life, 'Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl has set a fine example to my children of how to be a Christian...'

The school is seen as important to the church. There is a strong partnership with the parish churches which is maintained due to the dedicated work of the rector, the Ministry Area Team, foundation governors and members of the community. Members of the congregation are involved with school events. For example, the work to introduce and establish 'work stations' which are contributing significantly to the development of pupils' biblical understanding and spiritual development, is noteworthy.

The school meets the statutory requirement for collective acts of worship

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*I would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils of Ysgol Dyffryn Iâl Voluntary Controlled School for their welcome and cooperation.
Mrs Kath Thomas*

