



## St Asaph Diocese Statutory Section 50 Inspection

St Mary's Nercwys Voluntary Aided Church in Wales School

Village Road, Nercwys, Nercwys, Mold, Flintshire CH7 4EW

Date of Inspection: 31.03.2014

Date of last Inspection: March, 2008

School's unique reference number: 664/3021

Headteacher: Mrs J Meaden

Inspector: Rev'd Canon Pam Powell

**School Context** St Mary's Nercwys CiW Primary school is a village school two miles from Mold. Currently 14% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, 13% of pupils have ALN but no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. All pupils' ethnicity is white British. Very few pupils speak Welsh as a first language at home. The current headteacher was appointed in 1999 and the school changed its status from a Controlled to an Aided school in 2011.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Nercwys Church in Wales school is "Excellent"**

The ethos is distinctive and is effective as values evolve from worship and RE and permeate throughout the school. Pupils make connections across the curriculum in both Foundation Stage and KS2 and this is enhanced through a strong relationship with St Mary's Church and Agathos (an ecumenical project) The change of status is proving beneficial to both the school and church community as their relationship strengthens. Every member of the school is valued and achievement is celebrated and consequently there is a positive contribution towards learning and personal development.

### **Established strengths**

The quality of relationships between all members of the school community is one of valuing each individual. The staff are committed to and passionate about developing the school's Christian commitment. The value put on daily acts of worship in the school and its relationship with RE and the rest of the curriculum is evident. Governors are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's Christian values on the personal development and learning of pupils.

### **Focus for development**

- There is recording of worship since the last inspection but this needs further development to include evaluative comments to help future planning and to be completed by everyone who leads worship.
- Continue developing pupil participation in planning, leading and evaluating worship.

## **The school through its distinctive Christian character, is “excellent” at meeting the needs of all learners**

The school is a small, caring school with a pastoral system that supports the learning. It has made good progress since the previous inspection in placing links with St Mary’s Church more prominent as part of school life. The church is used as a resource as well as for prominent acts of worship during the year to celebrate major festivals and Year 6 leaving the school. Pupils are also invited to participate in Family Services in church and there are opportunities to visit the Cathedral and participate in Diocesan events. Agathos has initiated a heightened awareness of Collective Worship in the school through active pupil participation and also offers extra curricular opportunities. Pupils are comfortable to express their views on matters of faith and belief. The Christian values and vision are evident in the daily life of the school and pupils can identify biblical sources where these values emerge. The school is meeting the pupils’ spiritual needs by encouraging a prayer life for the school where children are invited to write their own prayers and to reflect upon topics and worship themes. Pupils have positive attitudes about the school and strive to achieve their best. Data shows that the school has been in the first quartile in the family of schools consistently over five years. Able and gifted pupils are challenged and all achievement is celebrated as well as evidence of awareness of school values. Pupils appreciate the care within the school shown by adults and this is replicated throughout the school between pupils of different ages. There is a strong family ethos within the school. Children feel safe at school and know who to talk to if they are worried or upset. Signs, symbols and photographs promote the Christian character of the school and there are spaces inside and out conducive to spiritual development. The newly formed garden encourages pupils to appreciate creation. The distinctive Christian character is developed further by encouraging pupils to think of those less fortunate than themselves. A number of charities are supported annually and pupils are encouraged to relate to the wider world, for example, by supporting Water Aid. The school initiated the change of status from Voluntary to Aided which resulted in a celebration event enjoyed by both school and church. Parents recognise the school as one which is caring and nurtures pupils in the Christian faith. Diocesan events linked to the Year of Pilgrimage and community events such as the Christmas Tree festival, carols around the tree, the nativity and Jubilee celebrations were all cited by parents as a positive contribution to the life of the school. All the parents who completed questionnaires were all aware of the school’s denominational characteristics and agreed that it is built upon clear Christian values which is also articulated in the Mission statement and prospectus.

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the school and members of the school recognize the importance of daily worship. The themes are relevant to all pupils and they are backed up by a rich resource of biblical material. Care is taken to link this with key values of the school and personal values of the children. The youngest children are keen to share prayers they have written. Seasons and festivals are celebrated in the school and the church. Pupils are encouraged to attend and participate in a monthly Family Service at St Mary’s. Pupils are confident and they respond well in worship. Since the previous inspection work has been done to reorganize worship to ensure more of an Anglican dimension, including use of pupil responses. The importance of a conducive atmosphere for worship and time for reflection has also improved the impact of effectiveness of worship, as well as reflective time at other times in the school day. Friday worship is particularly interactive when it is led by Agathos. Drama and pupil participation is key in these acts of worship and pupils are keen to play a part. All pupils are given opportunities in turn to do this and engage in the meaning and message of the worship. Pupils develop a knowledge of Jesus’ life and teachings and connect episodes and festivals well, for example, the relationship between Christmas and Easter. Worship is evaluated at all levels. Pupils use the ‘2 Stars and a Wish’ which is used across the curriculum. Staff evaluate as they plan and this would be improved if evaluative comments were included in the recording of all acts of worship. Governors monitor the evaluation through the link Governor for worship and the Incumbent.

### **The effectiveness of the Religious Education is “excellent”**

Evidence from Key Stage data and pupil work show a high level of achievement in RE. The good quality of teaching and learning reported in previous inspection reports has been developed further. INCERTS is now used to track pupil achievement and to promote pupil progress. Standards within RE have been very good in KS1 and improving in KS2. At the end of KS2 all pupils met the national targets and RE was in line, or exceeded core subjects. Schemes of work are based on County and Diocesan schemes and include Judaism and Islam through comparative study, for example through exploring themes such as Celebration and Places of Worship. KS1 distinguished well between seasons of the year and church seasons as well as Jesus as a baby and as a man. An understanding of days and events of Holy Week is clear and appropriate for this age. Cross curricular work is enabled through the planting of Easter gardens (Plant Biology) and the writing of “thank you prayers” (literacy, communication and Welsh) KS2 use cross curricular links, for example, through a biblical study of Lent alongside a range of physical features (rivers; mountains; valleys; desert etc) Group powerpoint presentations, incorporating geographical and biblical information are evaluated by the rest of the class (years 3-6) using ‘2 Stars and a Wish’. The use of a variety of Bibles (Sunrise Good News; Lion; Barnabas) aids differentiation of age and ability. All pupils are valued, irrespective of whether they wish to present their work in front of peers. Wider evidence of RE work is on display in classrooms, the church and in RE files. Pupils in both key stages enthusiastically show and talk about their work and link it with Collective Worship, school values and the wider church. Planning of work is detailed and allowed for differentiation and individual pupil response. Teaching is excellent, showing sensitivity and knowledge of subject area and pupils.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is “good”**

The leadership of the school strongly supported the change of status and as a result of that, appropriate provision for Collective Worship and RE. The Headteacher and staff are therefore committed to, or supportive of, the distinctive Christian ethos of a Church school and provide an appropriate example to pupils and staff in their interpersonal relationships and conduct. The Governing Body provides vision, support and challenge to the Headteacher and school leadership. Minutes of Governor’s meetings indicate that church links are good and developing and that there is some evaluation of worship. The trust and confidence that the leadership of the school generates in staff and pupils creates a learning community which is supportive, has high expectations and reflects Christian values in a climate of worship, achievement and celebration. The contribution made by the Headteacher to the effectiveness of Christian worship is appreciated. The Governing Body is also supportive of staff development which includes training provided by the Diocese. The school provides a Breakfast Club and an Afterschool provision through a local private nursery. Communication with parents is good. Parents feel that they can approach the school over problems, there are regular meetings to discuss pupil progress and a newsletter is sent to parents. The school contributes to a local village newsletter. There is liaison between other church schools, the local secondary school and Liverpool Hope University who place students in the school. Good and consistent leadership ensures that all pupils are secure in a well ordered, purposeful and harmonious learning environment. This is reflected positively in pupils’ attitudes and views on worship and curricular areas. Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their leadership qualities, for example, through the School Council. Communication is effective and supports teaching and learning. Support is used effectively so that there is differentiation and a variety of tasks.. There is good communication with the Incumbent and members of the community to help promote this vision. Dispersed leadership is developing and staff are keen to take responsibility for curricular areas. The school is small and therefore models family values and good pastoral support.

## APPENDIX

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

***The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education YES***

***The school has acted upon recommendations from the previous inspection report YES***

***The school's Admission's Policy meets statutory requirements (VA only) YES***

### Results of Parents' questionnaire (10 submitted)

	YES	NO
Are you aware that this is a church school?	100%	
Do you believe that the school is a caring institution built upon clear Christian values?	100%	

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The school has a distinctive Christian character	40%	50%	10%		
The school offers good support for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	30%	50%	10%		10%
The school makes a significant contribution to pupils' education	50%	50%			
The school keeps parents well informed about the work pupils do in Religious Education	10%	40%	30%	10%	10%
Pupils find Collective Worship a valuable experience	10%	70%	10%		10%
The school has effective links with the local church/community/communities *	50%	40%			
The school ensures links are made with the wider community. *	20%	50%	20%		

\*No response on one questionnaire

*I would like to thank the Headteacher, Staff, Governors and Pupils of Nercwys CiW School, for their welcome and cooperation. God's blessing for the future.*

***The Reverend Canon Pam Powell 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2014***