

Backwell Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Church Lane

Backwell

Bristol

BS48 3JJ

Diocese of Bath & Wells

North Somerset Council LEA

SIAS inspection: 11 October 2005

Previous S23 inspection: 2000

URN: 109183

Headteacher: Mrs. Maria Byrne

SIAS Inspector NS#119: Rev. John Angle

Summary Judgement

The school is distinctively and recognisably a Christian institution and is making outstanding progress as a church school. The school has a strong Christian ethos that welcomes children of all faiths and of none and effectively works in partnership with the Church and local community. It strongly promotes Christian values and spiritual awareness and development through many aspects of school life.

Established strengths

- There are very strong links between the school and the local church community which is of mutual benefit. This is a relationship of substance which gives strength at a practical, personal, pastoral, educational and prayerful level to the life of the school.
- There is a sensitive encouragement towards inclusiveness, tolerance and reconciliation as a significant part of the children's personal development as an expression of the Christian gospel.
- There is enthusiastic and strong leadership which is firmly based on Christian principles and effective management processes with very supportive and hardworking governors and staff.

Focus for development

- Increase the effectiveness of Religious Education through the development of monitoring, evaluating and assessment processes already in embryonic form in the school.
- Make the opportunities for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development in teaching more explicit in subject policies and where necessary in schemes of work. Consider giving planned opportunities to share ideas and experiences in this area of the curriculum.
- Consider incorporating a specific section on the development of the school's Christian Foundation in future School Improvement Plans.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet all learners' needs?

The school makes excellent provision to meet the needs of all its learners. Christian values are an integral part of the life and learning processes of the school. The Headteacher and the staff through their attitudes, caring and supportive actions are excellent role models for the children. Relationships within the school between staff, parents and pupils are positive and provide a calm, safe and supportive atmosphere where children can learn and achieve their highest potential. Attitudes and behaviour management are excellent. All children are regarded as special and all members of the school community know they are valued and appreciated. The personal development of the children is enhanced by a strong emphasis on multicultural education, by frequent contact with the local church community, by a sensitive awareness of a spiritual dimension to life and living and by the development of frequent opportunities in collective worship and in fund raising activities to fulfil Christ's command to "love the Lord with all their heart and to love their neighbour".

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community?

Acts of collective worship are outstanding and are a vital part of the school's day to day life and the foundation of its life as a Christian community. Acts of worship strongly support a sense of community and contribute extremely well to the spiritual and moral development of pupils and the Christian ethos of the school. Acts of worship are delivered with enthusiasm, imagination and with the objective or encouraging spiritual insight and growth in the children. Children are involved in acts of worship in a variety of ways. Children are encouraged to respond and do so with knowledgeable, thoughtful and joyful enthusiasm. Regular visits to the local church and regular visits to the school of the local Rector and other visits coupled with the use of simple aspects of Anglican liturgy and the participation in major church festivals, gives a recognisably Christian style of worship. There is an imaginative use of symbols and artefacts to support collective worship and spiritual development, for example in the use of a jar with pebbles washed in the water of forgiveness! The collective worship in the school gives all pupils opportunities to reflect on life issues, to be sensitive to the needs of others, to consider and express their values and concerns for the world and to sense the spiritual aspect of life.

How effective is the Religious Education in the school?

Religious Education is good and the quality of teaching and the support from learning support staff is of a very high standard. Teachers are extremely talented in their questioning skills and in drawing out the best in children. Pupils have a positive interest in the subject which strongly contributes to their spiritual and moral development. They are steadily developing their knowledge of religion and particularly of Christianity. From conversations and oral work in class and the evidence of writing in their class 'Big Books' they are applying many ideas and principles to their own lifestyles and to many community, social and world issues and concerns. Many opportunities are given to develop aspects of RE through church days (which are a unique and creative feature of this school), visits to places of worship, visitors coming in to school and through the annual multicultural fortnight.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

The Headteacher provides outstanding, strong, effective and spiritual leadership and is ably supported and encouraged by the senior staff, governors and the local Rector. The school's ethos statement which speaks of the school 'providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice' is a statement of principle which is quite clearly fulfilled in practice. There is a positive, mutually supportive, very close and productive relationship and partnership with the local church community. The school has in place effective procedures and policies to ensure strong and sustained development and high standards in all aspect of school life. The school leadership has correctly identified the fulfilment of plans to improve school facilities and buildings as a necessary requirement to ensure the future successful development of this church school.