

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Danesfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

North Road
Williton
Taunton
TA4 4SW

Diocese: Bath and Wells

LA: Somerset

Dates of inspection: 11 July 2006

Date of last inspection: November 2000

School's Unique reference number: 123895

Headteacher: Mr Ian Bradbury

Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett – NS 201

School context

Danesfield C of E Community Middle School has 504 children aged 9-13. The majority of children are white British. The catchment area is economically mixed with a high proportion of social disadvantage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average although the number of pupils with statements is below average. Pupils join the school with attainment below the expected level.

Summary Judgement

Danesfield C of E Community Middle School is a good church school with significant strengths. The school community reflects Christian values of love, care, respect and forgiveness. The Headteacher encourages personal development with an emphasis on spiritual growth.

Established strengths

- The outstanding Christian ethos enables all pupils to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the school.
- The senior managers and governors are committed to strengthening the Christian status of the school.
- Relationships within the school community are based on mutual respect.

Focus for development

- Begin a dialogue with all members of the wider school community to articulate the distinctive Christian character of the school and its impact on learners.
- Improve overall spiritual development within collective worship by ensuring there is a consistent approach to this throughout the school.
- Increase pupil participation in collective worship and in its regular evaluation.
- Place more emphasis on pupils' appreciation of the wider Christian church and other faiths outside the school community.

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

The school meets the needs of all pupils outstandingly well. Pupils are very much aware and appreciate the fact that the school places great emphasis on spiritual growth. This is reflected in the importance given to the 'Sacred Space' where pupils can go to be quiet and take time to reflect. The school chaplain plays a key role in the life of the school by providing support to children and adults. For example, he has established a system through which pupils can ask for advice. Relationships at all levels are based on Christian values. Pupils feel that they are respected by the teachers. This creates very positive attitudes with pupils respecting adults in return and by trying their best. Pupils comment with pride on the quality of relationships between each other. Help is given to those in need regardless of age which creates an environment where they feel very safe and secure. Forgiveness and inclusion are key values and these have a considerable impact on pupils. It gives them a strong sense of self belief and the confidence to express their thoughts and feelings. Pupils of all abilities make good progress compared to prior attainment, with support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities being a particular strength.

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

Collective worship is satisfactory. Attitudes towards collective worship are generally positive but pupils say they would like greater participation. The school offers a variety of styles of worship. There are opportunities for reflection and stillness but this is not consistent across the range of worship offered. The Worship Coordinator makes a valuable contribution to the Christian ethos of the school but monitoring of class group worship would ensure all pupils had opportunities for spiritual development. When the whole school meets, worship is predominantly Christian with symbols that are recognised by the pupils. They know, for example, that the colour of the cloth reflects the liturgical year. In moments of stillness children are encouraged to reflect on the meaning of the weekly theme. The majority of pupils take this opportunity and for these it is an important part of the worship. There are good links with a number of local clergy who regularly lead worship and of whom pupils speak highly. Clergy liaise with the Worship Coordinator in the planning of themes which follow the church year.

How effective is the religious education?

Religious Education is good. Standards in RE are comparable to foundation subjects and mostly in line with other core subjects. Pupils' attitudes are positive in lessons where they are actively engaged in their learning. Good teaching is characterised by challenging questioning and activities delivered at a quick pace. The best examples were when the teacher used a style which appealed to both boys and girls with lots of short learning activities and immediate feedback. The use of a short starter activity to recap on previous work was a very successful way to engage all the pupils and set the tone for the rest of the lesson. The school has the right balance between developing an understanding of Christianity and other faiths. Regular monitoring of provision ensures that the RE Coordinator has a good grasp of the issues and with the support of the Head of Humanities, has identified what needs to be done to raise standards.

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

Leadership and management are good with significant strengths. The Headteacher provides clear leadership which is committed to developing the spiritual and personal development of everyone in the school community. A strong senior management and supportive governing body make a significant contribution to the promotion of the distinctive Christian ethos of the school. Parents are positive about the school and speak of it as a place that values the individual person. Links with local churches are strong with the chaplaincy in particular providing a supporting role which is highly valued by the pupils. A significant development is the establishment of the Christian Ethos Group which has the potential to be a driving force and enhance the Christian character of the school. For example, it has raised awareness of the school's foundation by introducing Christian symbols throughout the school. Self-evaluation of the Christian dimension is good and the school has accurately identified issues which will raise standards.