

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Piddle Valley Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Dorchester

Dorset

DT2 7QL

Diocese of Salisbury

Dorset LEA

SIAS inspection: 29 November 2005

Previous S23 inspection: Not known

URN: 113811

Headteacher: Mrs. Carole McCormack

SIAS Inspector NS 181: Mrs. Jo Curd

Context of the school

Piddle Valley Church of England School started in 1848. It has been in its present building, in the centre of a rural community, since 1999. It is a popular and growing school. There are currently 89 pupils, from a wide range of backgrounds, on roll. About half of these join the school after the reception year.

Summary Judgement

Piddle Valley First School is a very effective Church of England School which is clearly and distinctively Christian. Leadership and management by the Head Teacher, Senior Management and Governors are outstanding. The caring, respectful, nurturing way that the needs of all pupils are met is also outstanding. Religious Education and Acts of Collective Worship are both good. Staff, pupils, parents and governors are right to be proud of this happy thriving Church School.

Established strengths

- The outstanding leadership and management ensure this is a caring, happy, well-run school where pupils make good progress personally, socially and academically.
- All pupils are valued and nurtured well. By the time they leave Year Four most pupils are confident, caring and polite with an interested, enquiring approach to the world around them.
- Pupils successfully gain an understanding of the wider world and its diversity of cultures and beliefs through the school's strong commitment to promoting this.

Focus for development

- Continue to implement and develop the new Locally Agreed Syllabus, Schemes of Work and relevant, useful assessment of Religious Education.
- Develop staff confidence in planning and teaching Religious Education.

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

The way the school meets the needs of all its learners is outstanding. The school considers its staff and pupils all to be learners and the development and welfare of all is paramount. The whole school, reflecting its Christian status, is a caring, nurturing place to be. Staff and pupils welcomed the inspector warmly. Parents report that they are welcomed and cared for too, especially in times of personal difficulty or change. Although there has been a significant rise in the number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the school's emphasis on support, its intervention programmes and its very caring ethos, means that these pupils are supported, managed and integrated well. Pupils are making good progress in their learning and all achieve well. Standards in each of the core subjects, including Religious Education, are broadly in line with national expectations. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy school. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all the pupils is very good. Classes, in this small school, are organised well to meet pupils individual learning needs. Pupils who find learning particularly easy or difficult are sometimes taught with pupils at similar levels rather than with their peers. Different learning styles as well as personality, ability and age are taken into consideration when organising groupings and classes. Pupil's independence is successfully encouraged and fostered. Older pupils have successfully organised charity sales, which have raised considerable amounts of money for people less fortunate than themselves. Pupil's views and opinions are sought and taken into consideration, for example, in developing the playground provision.

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

The impact of collective worship on the school community is **good**. It is central and the starting point of most school days. A calm and reflective atmosphere is successfully fostered through the use of quiet music and pupil's presentation of the school symbols, a candle, a cross and a Bible, at the front of the gathered school. Pupils behave well. The Anglican tradition is successfully reflected and honoured as the Head teacher states the meaning of each symbol and the school collectively responds. The faith of Christian believers is upheld and those with no specific faith are accepted and respect this important time in the school. Pupils have a broad and balanced programme of collective worship each week. This is well planned and makes very good use of staff and Governors. The local Rector takes an Act of Collective worship each week usually based on current affairs of the school, nation or world or the Church calendar. Teachers and other foundation Governors lead Acts of Collective worship regularly. Pupils particularly benefit from the diversity of worship that these individuals lead. Pupils are often invited to pray spontaneously as part of Collective Worship.

How effective is the religious education?

Religious Education is good. It is valued and treated as a core subject integral to the curriculum. There have been several changes in the leadership and structure of this subject since September. Until this time the Assistant Head Teacher, who is currently on long-term sick leave, taught all the Religious Education throughout the school. She is very committed and experienced and has made a significant contribution to pupil's Religious Education and development. A new Locally Agreed Syllabus and Schemes of work have also been introduced this term. It is now integrated into overall planning and teachers generally use the same approach of active learning for pupils throughout. Cross curricula links, for example with light and dark in Science, with writing in literacy and with different types of painting in art, are good and growing. Pupils enjoy

Religious Education and are keen to relate what they learn to previous lessons and to their own experiences outside school. Pupils work well together. They are making as good progress in Religious Education as other subjects and attain good standards by the time they leave Year Four. By this time pupils have acquired a firm foundation of knowledge about Christianity and some initial understanding about Judaism and Hinduism.

Equally importantly, discussion shows that they have developed a depth of questioning and respect about belief and the world around them which will stand them in good stead throughout life. Teachers enjoy the subject and are enthusiastic about its contribution to pupil's understanding of the wider world and diversity of cultures. They lack confidence however and express a need for more experience and training.

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

The leadership and management of the school, as a Church School, are outstanding. The Head Teacher is exceptionally well qualified and experienced. Leadership is enhanced by her knowledge of all new requirements, for example, training as a school inspector and taking part in first-hand research of schools in other countries. She has a strong focussed vision for the school, staff, and all the pupils, which she continuously and rigorously questions and monitors.

The school's self evaluation is accurate and secure. Other Senior Management are well-qualified competent leading teachers. They play an integral part in directing and challenging the school's vision and development. All the staff are valued, nurtured and seen as learners within the school community. Teachers and assistants are all well qualified. All the staff, including Midday Supervisors, are consulted on the school development plan.

The Governors are an asset to the school. They are fully and actively committed to the school's Christian foundation and provide a solid backbone to the school's community. The head aptly describes them as 'dedicated, supportive and far-thinking'. They actively support the pupils in many ways including leading a variety of Acts of Collective Worship There is a very good partnership between the school and the church.

SIAS NOVEMBER 2005 Piddle Valley CE VA First School, Dorset, DT2 7QL