

Rode Methodist Voluntary Controlled First School

High Street

Rode

Somerset

BA11 6NZ

Diocese of Bath and Wells

Somerset LEA

SIAS inspection: 5 December 2005

Previous S23 inspection: 4 – 7 December 2000

URN: 123823

Headteacher: Mrs C Tommey

SIAS Inspector NS#80: Mrs J Waters-Dewhurst

Context

This small rural first school with a Methodist foundation has two mixed-age classes. In the morning, Reception children are taught separately. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is well below average. Fewer than average pupils have learning difficulties. Most children attend some form of pre-school group before starting the school. Children start Reception with above average levels of attainment. The school is a 'Healthy School' and holds the Arts Council's Artsmark Gold Award. The Victorian building has been extended and is used imaginatively.

Summary Judgement

Rode Methodist First School is a good school with a distinctive Christian ethos which underpins the life of the school.

Established Strengths

- A strong Christian identity based in the Methodist tradition effectively teaches values of respect and inclusion
- There are strong links with the Chapel and community
- Excellent relationships exist throughout the school
- Religious Education is an important and valued part of school life

Focus for development

- To ensure that the schools church status is reflected in all its documentation (policies, mission statement, aims, etc)
- Make clearer links for pupils so that they understand that the values taught are Christian values
- Review the collective worship policy to include an appropriate Methodist definition of worship
- Ensure that staff are present more often for whole school acts of collective worship

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

The school makes good provision to meet the needs of all its learners. There is a broad and imaginative curriculum providing opportunities for success in many different areas. The physical and spiritual needs of pupils are developed through the imaginative development of the school grounds which include a sensory garden, a story garden, a wild life area and a climbing/activity area. The school is full of evidence of children's work and the work of those in the community who have worked with them, thus contributing to the sense of 'family' that is evident in the school. The Christian values of caring and acceptance are very apparent and help the pupils to develop a sense of empathy which they are able to put into practise when dealing with their peers. The school now needs to ensure that the children understand that the values taught are Christian values.

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

The impact of collective worship in the life of the school is good. Pupils enjoy the variety of leaders and styles of worship. They are given opportunities to participate on a number of levels and their contributions are valued. Opportunities are given to explore other cultural and religious traditions and there are opportunities for quiet and reflection. The act of collective worship seen was fully inclusive of those with other faiths or none whilst maintaining it's Christian identity. Collective worship would benefit further from the regular presence of all members of staff both to underline the importance of collective worship in the school and to allow for the discussion of issues raised in the worship as they arise later in the school day. Parents, staff and pupils enjoy the 'Smiley Service' which enables both pupils and staff to nominate those deserving of a reward. The collective worship policy now needs to be amended to reflect the good, inclusive practice seen and make specific reference to opportunity to worship God as well as outlining what is meant by worship.

How effective is the Religious Education in the school?

Religious Education in the school is good. This subject is an important part of the life of the school having an impact on pupils and parents who are enthusiastic about the content and quality of what is taught. The RE seen was imaginative and effective and links were made with other curriculum areas. RE is differentiated successfully taking into consideration the needs of the three year groups in each class. The RE coordinator is enthusiastic and has successfully implemented the locally agreed syllabus throughout the school including the use of assessment activities. She is keen to further her own expertise in the area of Key Stage 2 RE.

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

The leadership and management of the school are good. The head's strong vision for the school is evident and parents and governors are aware of it. Open communication with parents is appreciated and used to make further opportunities for the pupils for instance in contributions to extended opportunities in art and help with fund raising activities. There is a good relationship between the head and the governors, who play a very active role in the life of the school. The head is seen as being concerned about the whole child especially their spiritual development and the way in which this is out worked in a wholly inclusive way is seen as a great strength by governors and parents. The Methodist minister is a vital part of the school leadership. The head, and other members of the school community, live out the Christian values of this church school in an open and inclusive way. This good practise now needs to be fully recorded in school documentation. Such changes will ensure that it will be safeguarded should there be changes in staff or governors at some point in the future.