

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Beaminster Church of England Voluntary Controlled Secondary School,
Newtown,
Beaminster,
Dorset,
DT3 3EP.

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset

Date of inspection: December 15th 2008

Date of last inspection: 19th October 2005

School's unique reference number: 113884

Headteacher: Mr Mike Best

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. Jenny Pestridge (153)

School context

The school is a specialist technology college, in a rural setting. Its historic foundation originated in 1685, within nonconformist influences. The origins of the school are reflected in the school's voluntary controlled religious character. The majority of the 725 learners are white British. It is increasingly the school of choice for local families.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Beaminster School, as a Church of England school are good.

The school is providing a caring and reflective environment, where learners are valued, challenged and nurtured. Rigorous and enthusiastic leadership is resulting in good developments since the last inspection. The creative appointment of an Anglican Chaplain reflects the school's developing confidence to express its explicit Christian identity.

Established strengths

- The progress made in the expression the school's Christian identity, because of the commitment of the Headteacher and senior managers.
- The appointment of a school Chaplain and the impact of his contribution to the spiritual life of the school.
- The quality of the leadership and standards in religious education, and the importance given to the subject by senior managers.
- The quality of relationships in the school as an expression of the school's Christian identity.

Focus for development

- Place the aims of the school in an explicitly Christian context.
- Increase the school's partnership with the local and wider Christian community.
- Develop the role and impact of the foundation governors in an evaluation of the school's overall Christian identity, in partnership with senior managers.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners.

Learners are proud of their school and understand the school's foundation on Christian principles. They benefit from the good quality of relationships at every level. This is resulting in an atmosphere that is friendly, purposeful, and where all learners can make progress.

Learners praise the inclusive approach of the school, which guarantees equal access for all. Parents refer to the good level of communications and pastoral support for their children. As a result of the expectations and care provided by staff, the behaviour of learners is good. They are confident and enjoy being given an increasing role in decision-making. Learners with special needs, including behavioural and pastoral needs, are making good progress. It is the intention of senior managers that this care, guidance and support are seen in the wider context of Christian principles. The appointment of the Anglican Chaplain means that learners can discuss any issues from a spiritual perspective. His impact in the lives of learners is evident in both collective worship and also religious education. Creative teaching is emphasising opportunities for the development of learners' imagination. The school does not currently have a separate policy statement for spiritual development. However, an holistic approach to learners is evident in teaching styles and in the policy for teaching and learning. The impact of opportunities for spiritual development are not monitored or evaluated by foundation governors in conjunction with senior managers. Religious education is making a major contribution to the spiritual development of learners.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.

Collective worship is seen increasingly as relevant and important in the life of the school. This is shown by key developments in the organisation and planning of collective worship. These developments have taken place since the last inspection. They are an indication of the committed leadership and management by the Headteacher and senior management team. Diocesan themes are used in conjunction with other resources in a long term rolling programme. This means that learners are experiencing a variety of themes, which reflect continuity and progression. The school provides two acts of collective worship per week, for learners in Key Stage 3 and 4. These now have a Christian focus and contain time for reflection and spiritual development. Currently, there is no provision for collective worship in the shared 6th form. The initiative of "Thought for the Day" is underdeveloped in tutor groups. However, all staff are involved in the planning and leading of collective worship during the year. This development emphasises the effectiveness of the leadership of worship. Learners are involved in some aspects of worship, although their involvement in the long-term planning and evaluation of all weekly acts of worship is limited. It is the intention to include the foundation governors in monitoring and evaluation, however this is not currently taking place. Learners generally enjoy collective worship, which is reflected in their good behaviour. They comment on the relevance of themes to their own lives, particularly on those occasions led by the Chaplain. The use of visual aids and humour reflect creative planning by all those leading worship. The use of music as an aid to worship is being developed, which is good practice. The act of worship observed combined time for reflection and prayer with information about Advent. The joint leadership by the Chaplain and Deputy Head emphasised the collaborative ethos of the school.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a Church school is good.

The previous Section 48 report resulted in a rigorous review. This outcome reflects strong leadership by the Headteacher and senior managers. The review has resulted in redefining the school's aims; improvements in collective worship and the appointment of an Anglican Chaplain for one day a week. These developments are all making a significant impact in the lives of learners. The review took place because the school is proud of its Christian foundation in 1685. The definition and expression of its identity have been robustly debated over several years. As a result, the senior managers and governors have chosen to retain a Christian, rather than a denominational, interpretation of the original Foundation. This Foundation includes historical nonconformist influences. The school is still exploring the implications of its origins, desiring to be inclusive and ecumenical. This enthusiastic engagement with the debate is good practice. However, the school's strong intention to represent the breadth of Christian expression is not yet reflected in a breadth of ecumenical

partners. The Anglican Chaplain has a dual role, working with the school alongside parish responsibilities. This appointment is an indication of the support from the Diocese to encourage the school on its spiritual journey. The revised aims of the school implicitly reflect Christian principles. The school has a comprehensive understanding of its Christian practices; "we see worship as taking many different forms". This statement in the school's self-evaluation is reflected implicitly in the aims. However, there is currently no reference made to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as a context for these principles. There is also no reference made to either the Church of England, or any other church affiliation. Because of this, it is not clear where the school's ethos is grounded. Learners have a clear understanding of the moral values of the school. The Christian character of school worship is making a good impact on their spiritual awareness and development. Religious education is outstanding. High standards of achievement, coupled with the level of learners' enjoyment, reflect the quality of leadership and management of the subject. It receives a high level of support and status from senior managers, reflecting best practice. The foundation governors are still developing their role as critical friends. They are beginning to work effectively. However, their monitoring and evaluation of the overall Christian ethos of the school, in partnership with senior managers, is underdeveloped.

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