

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bisley Blue Coat Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane,
Bisley,
Stroud
GL6 7BE

Diocese of Gloucester

LA: Gloucestershire
Date of inspection: Wednesday, March 5th 2008
Date of last inspection: January 2004
School's URN: 115612
Name of Headteacher: Miss Samantha Porter
Inspector: Mr Andrew Rickett, NS 201

School Context

Bisley is a small primary school with 82 children, situated in the centre of the village. It draws children from the immediate area and surrounding villages. The socio-economic background of the children is mainly favourable with the majority coming from a white British heritage. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bisley Blue Coat CE VC as a church school are outstanding

Bisley Blue Coat is a faith community in which God is a reality and children talk openly about their beliefs. This has created an environment in which the high quality of care gives children many opportunities to flourish in their learning and personal development.

Established strengths

- All members of the school community talk openly about their beliefs.
- Worship is a central part of school life.
- The leadership of the school has a very clear understanding of how Christian principles can make an impact on the lives of the children.

Focus for development

- Develop the use of extemporaneous prayers in collective worship.
- Involve children in the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.

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

Children at Bisley Blue Coat are free to express their faith in an environment which accepts that God is a real presence. They have a very impressive maturity in their thoughts and have the confidence to ask questions that will develop their own views. At the same time, the children possess a humility which comes from an understanding that their own views may not necessarily be the same as other people's. Children look to the future with assuredness and have an awareness of their good fortune, giving thanks for it. The quality of relationships is extremely good. The excellent behaviour seems almost natural because it is rooted in care for others and a sincere wish to treat others with respect. Spirituality is an everyday part of school life. The school has a very clear understanding of how to grasp the essence of a spiritual experience when it happens spontaneously as part of life in the school. The quality of teaching and learning is good and children of all abilities progress well. In good lessons teachers are very skilled in the way that they question children to challenge their perceptions and encourage them to think at a far deeper level. Children respond to this very positively with great enthusiasm. This is a reflection of the high degree of care that teachers take to give children the very best experiences. The children's appreciation of other cultures is good. Through an exciting project the children are benefiting from learning about life in a variety of countries. The school is very keen to establish links with schools in Britain that reflect the diversity of cultures in our society. The celebration of Ascension Day, to recognise the blessing of water through the dressing of wells, is a hugely important part of the life of the school, the church and the village. The way that it brings all three communities together perfectly reflects the way in which there exists a real sense of belonging.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school is a community in which worship is a central and innate part of life. Children talk freely about how worship and prayer are used every day to help them in their lives both in and out of school. The 'Values for Life' scheme gives worship a very clear structure and is making a real impact on the children. They can explain how themes such as courage and humility are used to help them in their relationships. For example, one child explained how important it is to say sorry and shake hands if you have upset another person. Acts of worship take place every day either as a whole school or in the more intimate surrounding of class groups where children have the opportunity to explore the theme in greater depth. Reflection is a very powerful part of worship. Children are guided in their thinking and asked to focus on the real meaning of the message that the worship is delivering. Each child has a 'reflections book' in which they write down their thoughts and feelings. It is a private moment and children regard this book highly, saying that it helps them to understand how they feel. The importance of prayer is reflected in the way that children have very enthusiastically adopted a new school prayer. It was written with the help of a member of the village who worked with the children to express the thoughts and aspirations of the community. Their involvement has therefore given the children a real sense of ownership of their prayer. Children have a very good understanding of prayer as a means of talking with God and establishing a relationship with Him in which they can talk openly about their concerns. As a result, attitudes towards worship are extremely positive. The church is used regularly to celebrate major Christian festivals and mark special times in the life of the school. This has given children a familiarity with the church building, which they regard as a natural extension of the school. A very good example of the closeness of the links between

school and church will be the lighting of candles along the path that connects the two communities on Maundy Thursday.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school are outstanding

The headteacher has a passion for promoting the Christian ethos of the school and talks openly about how her faith makes a difference in her own life. Her vision for the school is exceptional, is clearly communicated to all those in the school community and is fully supported by governors and parents. They regard her as an excellent role model who leads her life according to Christian principles. Governors have a very good grasp of the school's Christian mission and understand how it underpins the school ethos. Foundation governors play an important part in the life of the school both through their involvement in worship and in supporting areas of the curriculum and extra curricular activities. The church is a continual presence in the life of the school through its close proximity but also through a widely held belief that it is the foundation on which the school's identity as a Christian community is based. The vicar is a regular and familiar figure in school and helps to reinforce the presence of the church in school. He fulfils a pastoral role for both adults and children, for example he is regularly present in the playground, and has a strong commitment to supporting the development of the children's faith. The RE Coordinator is the headteacher and she has a real commitment to the subject. RE makes a significant contribution to the children's spiritual development and actively encourages them to consider some of life's big questions. Parents appreciate that the strong Christian ethos has a positive impact on their children and say that the quality of relationships helps their children to understand the importance of caring for others. In particular, parents agree that the staff show a remarkable degree of commitment to caring for their children. The school forms a very big part of the community along with the church and village itself. It is difficult to separate these three elements. Parents with children from outside the village say that they feel part of the local community because of its close involvement with the school.

SIAS report March 2008 Bisley Blue Coat CE VC, Stroud GL6 7BE