

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Datchet St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Green

Datchet

Slough

Berkshire

SL3 9EJ

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Date of inspection: 28th January 2008

Date of last inspection: October 2003

School's Unique reference number: 110034

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Jean Pinkerton

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Alan Thornsby 137

Context

St Mary's school is a large primary school that serves a wide range of socio economic backgrounds. Most pupils are white British. There are others from a variety of minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is Romany. The school is popular and often oversubscribed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's as a Church of England school are outstanding

This is because of the vision and commitment of all in school to create a safe and effective learning environment that has Christian values firmly embedded at the heart of the school. This results in everyone been seen as being made equal in the sight of God, treated with care, respect and tolerance and given the opportunity to develop their individual capabilities.

Established strengths

- The extent of the impact of Christian values on the lives of everyone in school
- The sense of belonging to an inclusive family community
- The commitment of staff, governors and clergy to the personal and academic development of all pupils

Focus for development

- Review the mission statement so that it gives an accurate picture of the extent of the education provided by the school.

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

Christian values permeate the fabric and practice of this school. They are embedded in every policy, modelled by the head and staff in their daily lives and reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of pupils. This is a truly inclusive school. All are seen as being made equal by God, have respect for fellow human beings, and are valued as unique individuals. Care, respect and tolerance are reflected in the commitment of the staff team to develop every child regardless of their abilities and enable their 'nuggets of gold' to grow and flourish. There is great sensitivity to the background of every individual and their unique needs. Adults challenge and support pupils' academic and personal achievement. A range of incentives and rewards encourages success. This is the foundation of a Christian community, within the local church community, in which pupils are given opportunities to practice 'values for life'. This enables them to be confident and articulate. All are aware of the value of forgiveness and the new start after any dispute. Pupils may share concerns through 'a worry box' and know they may confide in an adult in school. Being a member of the school council or having one of a vast range of responsibilities for other people or aspects of school life gives pupils first hand experiences of care, respect and tolerance that are key factors of this caring Christian environment. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their roles and can explain for example the differences between a peer mediator and a peacemaker.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the ethos of this school as a means of reinforcing the values integral to the school. Well-planned themes, introduced to the whole school at the beginning of each week are explored and made more relevant to each year group during class worship. The co-ordinator regularly monitors worship planning. This with a cycle of observations gives a basis for discussion and the sharing and development of ideas. Pupils create a reverent atmosphere for worship that is enhanced by music chosen by a pupil. Expressive singing by pupils, with effective accompaniment and actions to aid understanding, furthers the special atmosphere and adds to spiritual development. Pupils value thought for the day and reflection times as opportunities to acknowledge 'God is always there'. They value opportunities to ask for help and guidance through the use of the prayer tree. Links with RE and the effective teaching of Christian stories increases the impact and benefit of worship for pupils. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the moral lessons of parables and can for example explain in detail the meaning of the 'Parable of the Sower' and its relevance to their own lives. The respect given to the belief of each individual creates an inclusive community of faith within the school. And all can reflect on their own spiritual development. Worship led by foundation governors and from local churches gives pupils a broader awareness of Christian denominations and also directly informs the governing body of the impact of worship. The school is involved with the wider worshipping community by using the church for festival services and joining the village in the Remembrance Day service.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

RE has a high profile within school and as it features in the school development plan is constantly reviewed to extend opportunities for exploring and reinforcing the ethos of the school. The effective coordinator attends inset courses and shares knowledge and new developments with staff. Cross-curricular links are identified in planning to illustrate how RE is an integral part of the life of the school. The teaching is good or better because of teacher knowledge and effective questioning skills that develop children's thinking. Pupils clearly enjoy RE and explain how learning about different religions promotes tolerance and respect. They also explain how the study of other faiths and visits to other places of worship promotes their understanding; one particular child cited the comparison of Abraham and Ibrahim that showed common features of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Work scrutiny and end of unit assessment show that pupil achievement is at least in line with national expectations. Pupils acknowledge that marking comments by teachers help their understanding. Although there is some use of philosophical questioning to challenge pupils, they do not have sufficient opportunity to consistently explore big questions. Themes such as the Lives of Inspirational people give pupils opportunities to understand how faith affects lives and relate this to their own lives. The involvement of the school in a diocesan project 'Organworks' at Eton Collage Chapel is allowing pupils to respond to a spiritual stimulus and express themselves in a variety of creative ways,. This is challenging pupil knowledge and understanding of RE and allowing them to express a practical and personal response.

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

The head has a clear understanding of her role in leading a Christian school. She leads a committed staff team all of whom show in their daily lives and routines a commitment to the educational and spiritual development of everyone in the school. The governing body shares the vision of providing pupils with a Christian foundation for life. Parents have great respect for and trust in the school. They know the head and staff are very approachable and appreciate the presence of the head and a member of staff in the yard before school to welcome and discuss any issues they may have. The governing body is effective in providing support and challenge for the school. Although the members of the governing body are involved in the everyday life of the school in their roles as RE and worship link governors and have been involved in exploring the distinctiveness as a church school, they have not yet addressed the school mission statement which does not give an accurate précis of the excellent work of the school. The ecumenical foundation governors reflect the local community and as representatives from different churches

give the school a wider community support.

The school has very strong links with the village community that includes carol singing on the village green and involvement in village events. These links are strengthened for staff by an annual 'Tea Party' for staff, governors and members of the Parochial Church Council. Links with the diocese and other schools, for example singing in a local schools concert, allow all to be a part of a wider community.

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