

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Draycott and Rodney Stoke Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

School Lane

Cheddar

Somerset

BS27 3SD

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset County Council

Dates of inspection: 20th November 2007

Date of last inspection: 2nd-5th June 2003

School's unique reference number: 123832

Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Lowe

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Daphne Spitzer - 37

School context

Draycott and Rodney Stoke Church of England First School serves both the villages it is named after. There are 72 children on roll, accommodated in 3 classes. The buildings have been extended and upgraded in recent years, are of good quality and together with the grounds provide an attractive and spacious setting in which to learn.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Draycott and Rodney Stoke Church of England First School as a church school are Good.

The school also has some outstanding features. The newly appointed headteacher is working closely with the governing body to develop the existing strong Christian foundation and the partnership between the school and church community which is excellent.

Established strengths

- Strong Christian ethos which permeates the daily life of the whole school community.
- The quality of the leadership of the new headteacher and governing body and their commitment to the school's Christian character.
- The excellent partnership of the church and school community.
- The way the church is used to provide opportunities for regular collective worship by the school community which is uniquely child friendly and meaningful.

Focus for development

- Ensure there is a short and long term plan for the development of the school's Christian dimension as part of the school development plan.
- Develop a long term coherent plan for worship, implement and evaluate using all the stakeholders, including the children
- Review and develop the existing RE scheme of work and opportunities for assessment and incorporate the latter into the school's pupil tracking system.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is Good in the way it meets the needs of all learners

Draycott and Rodney Stoke Church of England First School is a warm and welcoming Christian community. All members feel valued and special. The level of care given by the older children to the younger is outstanding. This is demonstrated by the way the Y4 children lead the little ones back to school from church and the way children of all ages play happily together. Children said there was "no bullying" because everyone was "always kind." One child said it was "a happy and good school." A parent described the school community as an enjoyable "fellowship." Parents noticed the impact of the school's Christian culture in the way their children "talk about God" and care and show concern for the world around them. The school and its church enjoy a very special partnership as a joint focal point of the village. The life of the parish is enriched by the life of the school. This is evident by the beautiful altar cloth

made for St Peter's Church by the children and is highly valued by the parishioners. Annual fund raising events, such as the Christmas fair, are held jointly at the school and in the church next door and monies shared. There is a clear focus on caring for others; harvest gifts are taken to Bristol to help the homeless and a group of the older children visit the local care home to sing carols to the residents each year. The headteacher has made some small but significant changes in the short time since her arrival in September. For instance, each classroom now has a quiet corner with a spiritual focus for reflection. Special services celebrate acts of kindness by the children and a collective worship display board in the hall centred on the Christian ethos of the school have both been introduced. Focus weeks are an integral feature of the school's year and include the promotion of the church and local community which is one of the school's strengths. The school makes good provision to meet the needs of all its learners. Academic achievement and progress in learning is good. The school's Christian character has a good impact on the learners' personal development. The School Council and 'buddies' enjoy a good level of responsibility and contribute significantly to the well being of the whole school community. Parents, governors and local parishioners also play an important and much valued role.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is Good

Worship occupies an important place in the life of the school. All staff regularly lead acts of collective worship and frequently governors are present too. Local parishioners join the school community for collective worship when it takes place in church, which occurs fortnightly. Excellent use is made of the church, where the older children create an appropriate space for the small children and it is transformed into "their church", as some children described it. A unique atmosphere of reverence was the predominant feature of this transformation, quite different from worship in the school hall. They walk the short distance across the churchyard and enter and leave very quietly. The quality of the act of collective worship observed was good. It was led by the vicar, who used the story of Joseph, illustrated with the assistance of a teddy bear dressed in a coat of many colours, to link into the theme of anti bullying. A child lit the candles and Anglican traditions were observed. For instance, the children joined in appropriate responses and said the Lord's Prayer. They sang a hymn, which they knew by heart, with evident enjoyment. Acts of worship usually take place in the attractive school hall and once a week each class has collective worship in the intimate setting of their own classroom. The major festivals of the church year, Harvest, Christmas and Easter are celebrated in church with parents joining the congregation. The headteacher is the collective worship coordinator and works closely with the vicar and staff developing themes. There is a variety of acts of collective worship during the week, which mainly promote Christian values as well as celebrating children's achievement and acts of kindness. Children's attitudes towards this aspect of school life are good as seen by their good behaviour and attentive listening. One child said that during collective worship they "think about Jesus and that He's with us".

Prayer is an integral part of the school day. Children choose from a Book of Graces written by them, to say before lunch together in the hall each day.

The local Baptist minister regularly visits to lead worship and a Christian visitor from South Africa recently talked to the children in their classes. The need to widen the range of visitors to address and so increase the children's understanding of cultural diversity is being addressed.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is Good.

As stated in the policy, the school places the teaching of Religious Education at the heart of its life as a church school. Standards are high as with the other core subjects.

The children's understanding of the Christian faith is good as is their knowledge of the other faiths taught, Judaism and Hinduism. Recent whole school celebrations of the theme of "Festivals of Light" focussing on Hannukah and Divali had had a good impact. High quality displays of the children's work about these two festivals form an attractive focal feature in the school's entrance foyer. Children understood the purpose of RE, "that it helps us understand about other faiths and what it's like....", as one child said. The teaching in the lessons observed was good. The Reception class were exploring feelings of anger. The teacher engaged the children's interest very well due to the clarity of her lesson planning, meaningful

resources and good questioning skills. The activities were interactive and fun. For instance, photographs were taken of the children pulling the appropriate faces for later discussion. The children fully understood the task as demonstrated by a few of their comments "I feel angry when my Mum tells me to go to bed" and "I feel angry when I find something really difficult." The older children were learning about the symbolism of light, providing opportunities for spiritual development. Resources for RE are currently being audited and reviewed. A dad who was Jewish had contributed much to Mars class's knowledge and understanding of the Jewish faith as demonstrated by a child's detailed description of Sabbat.

Although there is a scheme of work, it was developed a few years ago and is now being reviewed. RE is regularly featured by the governors on the school's development plan and there is a link governor for this core subject. However, the role of the RE subject leader is as yet underdeveloped and this is being now addressed.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are Good

The commitment of the headteacher and the governing body to the school is outstanding. Several governors are also key leaders in the church which aids the close working relationship. Together with the new headteacher, governors ensure that Christian values are central to the life of the school. Parents praise the governors for being "incredibly active" in support of the school and feel valued because they know the governors are active listeners. Governors are known personally, are linked to each of the classes, are very approachable, visit daily and are truly part of the school community. They form strong links with the communities of the two villages as well as the local churches. The headteacher and governing body work in close partnership and provide effective leadership, for instance, by discussing the school's Christian vision at their first meeting each year. Staff feel valued and relationships throughout this church school are strong. The vicar works closely with the headteacher planning themes for collective worship and working hard to embed and sustain the close partnership with the school. However, the school's Christian foundation does not have clear strand as part of the school's long and short term development plan. This would ensure that the leadership and management of the school was more focussed and effective in their evaluation of the Christian foundation. The school's self evaluation of its performance as a church school is accurate and given the high level of commitment of the head and leadership team, its capacity to continue to improve is good.