

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Forest and Sandridge Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Sandridge Common,
Melksham,
SN12 7QS

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire

Dates of inspection: 4th May 2007

Date of last inspection: September 2002

School's unique reference number: 126402

Headteacher: Mrs Anna Coombs

Inspector's name and number: Mr A W G Rickett 201

School context

Forest and Sandridge is slightly smaller than the average size school. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is in line with the national average. The majority of children are from a white British heritage. The catchment area covers a wide rural area. There have been considerable changes to staffing in recent times.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Forest and Sandridge CE VA School as a Church of England school are good

The great strength of the school is the high quality of relationships between all members of the school community. The children feel valued as individuals which has a positive effect on their learning and personal development and dissipates the disadvantages inherent in the school's built environment.

Established strengths

- There is a real sense of care between all members of the school community.
- An emphasis on the individual means that all children have opportunities to succeed.
- The Headteacher makes a very valuable contribution to the community both in school and beyond.

Focus for development

- Ensure that teaching and learning strategies used in Religious Education are consistent throughout the school.
- Increase the level of participation of children in collective worship.
- Introduce procedures to identify the impact of collective worship on the school community.

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

Forest and Sandridge School is a community which values each person as an individual. There is high level of mutual respect which can be seen in the relationships that exist between all members of the school. Look beyond the rather dismal built environment and there is a community which engages with each other in values based on Christian teaching. As a parent explained, 'the school is not the building but the people in it'. This was seen in the way that older children automatically take the hand and care for younger ones when they need support because it is a natural thing for them to do. Children feel safe at school and know that they can trust their teachers, which gives them the confidence to ask challenging questions. They know that their opinions will be listened to and that everyone's views will be valued. Attitudes are positive and children say that they feel secure in their future. They do well in their learning and those with learning difficulties make particularly good progress because of the high level of care taken to ensure that they have opportunities to succeed. The School Council is an important part of school life and has made a significant contribution

towards improving the environment of the school. At a deeper level and implicit in the school's ethos lies the value of forgiveness. Children can explain that every day 'is a fresh start'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Prayer is used throughout the school to reflect on what has happened during the day. Even the younger children offer to lead class prayers with enthusiasm and have the confidence to do so in an extemporaneous way. They know that prayer is a special time and that they remain still in order to listen to God. This sense of a special time is reinforced in collective worship when a candle is lit and children are reminded that it is a sign that God is with them. The vicar regularly leads worship both in school and at the parish church. He is a familiar figure to the children who understand that his role requires him to have a deep-seated faith. They feel confident to approach him and ask questions. Worship is well planned and covers themes that follow the Christian year but also gives children opportunities to consider some of life's important questions. Attitudes to worship are good among the children. They say that it is a special time for them to learn about God and that this is important because it shows them how to lead their lives. The school has also had an enormous impact on worship in the wider community. The Headteacher actively encourages children and their parents to attend worship in the parish church. They have done this in significant numbers and it has made a difference to the pattern of worship in the church.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The quality of teaching was good on all lessons observed. Children responded with enthusiasm and made impressive progress. It was particularly good in lessons where the subject was brought alive for the children by relating it to their own experiences and asking them about their feelings. For example, Jewish persecution was likened to friendships and the following of a favoured football team. From this children began to discuss feelings such as betrayal, regret and loyalty which they could relate to the Jews. The success of this lesson was in the careful preparation, the very good use of teaching assistants to lead different groups and the high level of open-ended questioning. Teaching is becoming more creative and children's attitudes to RE are improving because strategies are being used which engage them in their learning. The school recognises the need to make sure that this is consistent throughout the school. Standards are comparable to other core subjects and assessment procedures are in place to monitor the progress being made.

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

The Headteacher shows a very clear commitment to promoting the school's Christian character. This ethos has been strengthened significantly under her leadership. She has made a huge difference in the quality of relationships in the school community, which is now a key strength in the school and has had a positive impact on children's learning. She has also been instrumental in successfully creating bridges between the school and church communities and has had a genuine influence on church life. This has created a strong link between the two communities which goes beyond the physical, becoming a spiritual closeness. The vicar is a familiar presence in the school and children enjoy it when he comes to visit them. He has the enthusiasm and vision to see that the bond between the two communities can continue to grow. The governors are well informed about the issues surrounding the school's VA status and are committed to strengthening them. They realise that the success of the school lies with the people that make up its community. The RE Co-ordinator has a good grasp of what needs to be done to take the subject forward, by extending the range of beliefs and opinions of the children so that they develop their own self awareness and appreciation of others. Parents are very supportive of the school and say that the Headteacher has made a big difference to the atmosphere of the school, particularly in making everyone feel welcome. They are very happy with the progress that their children make and especially value the way that the school strives to ensure every child feels special.

