

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican School

Frome Valley Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

School Drive

Crossways

Dorchester

DT2 8WR

Diocese: Salisbury

LA: Dorset

Date of inspection: 11th March 2008

Date of last inspection: 14-15th January 2003`

School's Unique Reference Number: 113763

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Helen Boyce

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number: Jo Curd 181

Context

There are currently 100 pupils aged between 4 and 9 years in this small rural first school. The school took voluntary aided status in 2002. In 2006 it assumed its new name and moved into new buildings in a new location. It offers breakfast, after school and holiday care. Several pupils join the school after the reception year. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities vary considerably between year groups but overall are in line with the national average.

Summary Judgement

The school's effectiveness and distinctiveness as a church school is outstanding.

Despite the challenges of moving into a new school building in a new location the outstanding leadership and management have gained an outstanding judgement from Ofsted, ensured that worship is central and highly effective and that Religious Education is good.

Established strengths

- Highly effective leadership and management ensure that self evaluation is rigorous and that areas identified for development are acted upon and improved
- The way all pupils are nurtured and supported successfully helps them become polite, confident, active citizens of their school and wider community.
- The atmosphere and planning of worship provides an interesting, inspiring and affirming daily time for the reflection and spiritual development of all present.

Focus for development

- Improve teaching and learning in Religious Education by ensuring that work is effectively varied to meet the needs of all pupils and that success criteria, marking or targets show pupils how they can improve in the subject.

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

The needs of all pupils are met extremely well. The recent Ofsted inspection found almost all the aspects of the school which it looked at, including care, support, achievement, standards and personal and social development, to be outstanding. The Local Authority has recognised the schools strengths in supporting pupils and helping them explore and express their emotions by making it a lead school for Wave

3 support and its 'SEAL' programme. Staff know all the pupils well and treat them as unique, special and valuable individuals. Any challenges or difficulties are supported well and gifts or talents are recognised and developed. An example of this was the introduction of drum lessons for some able percussionists. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities recognise and appreciate the very high level of care and support which their children are given. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and are keen to learn and attend. They are clearly happy, confident and secure. Discussions reveal high levels of compassion, maturity, self-esteem and independence. Behaviour is extremely good. Pupils enthusiastically contribute to those around them by helping with tasks, such as putting chairs away at the end of worship, providing ideas through the school council, caring for younger pupils and taking part in local events. They successfully learn to understand and express their emotions with the help of their 'emotional barometers', and are sensitive to the feelings and beliefs of others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Staff have worked well to overcome 'snagging' difficulties of their new school. Whilst there are aspects, which are not yet complete they are using initiative to make the most of the very attractive new building and all that it offers. The way that the atmosphere for worship in the school hall, which is also used for lunch and 'wake and shake', is created is highly successful.

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

Collective worship has a very central place in the school. All the pupils know that it has a strong priority in each school day and value the opportunity to be still, reflect and pray with others. Acts of collective worship are well planned and adapted from the local scheme which is outward looking, interesting and relevant. Although there are currently no pupils from faiths other than Christianity, Acts of Worship are appropriate for pupils of all faiths and none. They are welcomed by pupils who regularly attend church and those who don't. Staff successfully adapt the local scheme to meet the specific needs of pupils in the school, for example, swapping topics to provide a settled secure start to the week. It is firmly based in Biblical stories and Christian prayer such as the Lord's prayer, which pupils confidently say together. The scheme successfully incorporates stories from other cultures such as Daedalus and Icarus in a theme of humility, in a positive, relevant way. A quiet, reflective atmosphere, highly conducive to worship is successfully created in the school hall through the use of dimmed lighting, artefacts including a cross, candles and music. The vast majority of pupils behave extremely well, remaining still and listening attentively and respectfully. They are well involved through singing, saying extemporary spontaneous prayers and acting out stories. Pupils are also involved in saying grace before meals and prayers at the end of the day. They are keen to be involved even more, for example, through reading aloud. There are extremely good links with local churches. Two local clergy lead worship each week and foundation governors are committed church members. . These visits successfully add to pupils understanding of the Anglican church and church's year. Pupils, including the school choir, attend a local church for praise services and church services are held in the school at Harvest and Ascension. Informal evaluation has successfully led to formal discussions and improvements such as adapting the atmosphere for worship, applying for money to create a permanent place for reflection and worship and purchasing a box for pupils' prayers.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good.

Religious Education has a high priority in the school. It is given more time than in most schools and was one of the first subjects in the school to receive a thorough review. The good progress pupils make contributes well to their extremely good spiritual and moral development. For example, in Year 4 pupils were highly engaged in robust discussion on forgiveness and betrayal. Assessments indicate that pupils start with standards slightly below those expected for this age but are at least in line with those expected by Year 4. This is largely due to good teaching and learning and

stories heard in Acts of Worship. Good resources are successfully supplemented by pictures and information from suitable computer websites. Pupils are positive about the subject, particularly acting out stories and learning about faiths other than Christianity including Judaism and Hinduism. They are very well behaved, engaged and eager to learn. Careful planning from the Diocesan scheme ensures a broad and relevant curriculum. Relationships are good and teachers question effectively. Whilst they obviously read pupils' work they tend to date rather than mark it. This does not question pupils' thinking or help them to improve. Although lower attaining pupils are supported well tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to meet their various learning needs and are occasionally too difficult or easy for some. Although lesson objectives are usually well rooted in religious understanding and development success criteria are sometimes more focussed on English.

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

The very able and committed head teacher successfully leads and inspires a settled and highly effective team of staff who have a cohesive shared vision for the school. Their distinctively Christian vision is made explicit to parents and the whole school community as the opening sentence in the school prospectus. More time than is nationally recommended is allocated to Religious Education and worship has a prominent and central place several times each school day. The vision leads to a very positive, caring, supportive and inclusive ethos for all. Monitoring and evaluation are strong. The head teacher, senior management and governors know school very well. They clearly identify areas for development and have acted on many, for example, improving the atmosphere for collective worship. The whole school community carried out a very thorough review of Religious Education in 2007. Leaders and managers astutely identified areas for development. Although plans to improve these are in place, the absence of the Religious Education coordinator due to maternity leave and snags of the new school have contributed to the fact that they have not yet not been fully implemented. An effective partnership with pupils, parents, the church and the wider community are strengthened through frequent questionnaires and informal daily contact. Improvement since the last inspection is exceedingly good. Pupils' progress in each unit of Religious Education is assessed; an increased number of adults taking part in collective worship has enriched the experience for all. The new school building is proving positive for all the pupils and all aspects of the school day.

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