

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Plympton St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School**

Market Road  
Plympton  
Plymouth  
PL7 1QW

#### **Diocese: Exeter**

Local authority: Plymouth  
Dates of inspection: May 2nd 2007  
Date of last inspection: September 2002  
School's unique reference number: 113486  
Headteacher: Mrs Mary Wild  
Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett 201

#### **School context**

Plympton St Mary's is slightly smaller than the average school with 163 children. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of children are of a white British heritage. Most children come from the immediate area which has good provision for housing. The school buildings are a mix of old and very new.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Plympton St Mary's as a Church of England school are good**

Through its strong emphasis on Christian values, children at Plympton St Mary's acquire a well developed self awareness which contributes to an appreciation of how other people live their lives. This is a community which allows each individual to grow spiritually and gives children the confidence to ask questions in their learning.

#### **Established strengths**

- There is a high degree of respect in the quality of the relationships between all members of the school community.
- Children show great care and compassion in the way that they treat each other.
- The impact of collective worship has a positive effect on the ethos of the school.

#### **Focus for development**

- Clarify progression in the RE schemes of work throughout the school.
- Strengthen the existing links between the school and church communities.
- Develop the role of governors in monitoring and evaluating collective worship and religious education.

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

The school's central message is that everyone has a worth in the eyes of God. There is a wonderful feeling that everyone in the school community genuinely appreciates the unique quality of the individual. This is evident in the way that people treat each other with great respect. Children are encouraged to develop a self awareness by exploring their feelings and emotions and through the many opportunities to reflect and talk about them. Moreover, the children are challenged to understand the reasons why they feel a particular way. Through this, children develop their awareness of others and an appreciation of the individuality of

another person. This was demonstrated when one child spontaneously wrote in his own prayer book and brought it to school to show everyone. Children and adults alike responded with sincere encouragement, interested in understanding the reason why this young person had done this and valuing his answers. This is part of the ethos of the school; that children are encouraged to talk about and question their ideas and beliefs without embarrassment, knowing that their answers will be listened to with respect. All of this has a huge effect on the personal growth of the children who leave school with the confidence that they can share their thoughts and feelings and have the skills to listen to others too. The emphasis on valuing each individual gives children very positive attitudes towards school. Children say that they like learning because it will help them when they are older. Children of all abilities make good progress and standards are above average by the time children leave the school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Worship is a central part of the school ethos and is an important way in which children develop their sense of awareness and appreciation of others. Children see worship as a special time whether it is held in the school or in church. They understand that the cross in the school hall is there for the same reason as the cross in the church. Worship is carefully planned to include opportunities for children to talk about their beliefs and for them to explore the reason why they do and feel certain things. For example, they are asked to consider challenging issues such as the meaning of everlasting life. Children enjoy these moments and rise to the challenge. Prayer is used in worship and throughout the school day. Even the youngest children understand that prayer is something special, that they are talking to God and that He knows they are praying to Him 'because `Amen` is said at the end'. Children are able to explain that this understanding that God is listening to them is an important part of their lives because He cares for each of them. Local clergy are closely involved in worship both in school and at the church. Children know that they go to church to worship and they like doing so because the clergy make it relevant to their own personal experiences. Worship is recognisably Anglican in its content and a common liturgy is used both in school and in the church helping to strengthen the links between the two communities. The impact of worship also extends beyond the immediate school and church. Parents talk of children discussing issues at home with them and asking if they can go to some of the special services in the church. Worship is monitored and evaluated on an informal basis but the school has identified the need to put in place a more systematic procedure to do this.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

The quality of teaching and learning in RE has improved. This is because careful thought has been given to presenting learning experiences in creative ways. Children enjoy these activities and engage in them with enthusiasm. In lessons where the teaching is good, children are given opportunities to reflect on challenging questions and then interpret them in a creative way that is personal to them. Progress in these lessons is good and children can explain what they have learnt. In one session, children were taken on a walk around the school to identify signs and symbols and finished by looking at the cross in the Hall. Through the skilled questioning of the teacher, children came to understand that the cross has a much deeper meaning than some other types of symbol around school. Teaching assistants are used very successfully to support children in their learning and help to ensure that children of all abilities do well. Standards overall are good. Assessment is used regularly to identify progress and is effective in identifying targets for different cohorts of children. The recent appointment of a new RE Co-ordinator has had a positive impact on the quality of RE in the school. Children's positive attitudes towards RE continue to grow because lessons are more creative and are made relevant to their lives.

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

The Headteacher has a passionate commitment towards developing the spirituality of every child. People in the school community talk of her great care for others and recognise that she

provides a role model for the Christian ethos of the school. She maintains close links with the church community through her attendance at Parochial Church Council meetings, reporting to them on matters that concern the school. Clergy from the church are seen as an important part of the school by children and their parents. The vicar is a familiar figure in the school and children talk to her with ease, helping to create a sense that the two communities have a bond. Governors have a clear grasp of the issues that church schools face and are committed to enhancing the school's Christian foundation. One of the Foundation Governors explained that the special feel of the school comes from the gift of love which can be seen on the faces of the children. The newly appointed RE Co-ordinator has the vision and enthusiasm to see what needs to be done to make the subject something special for the children. Parents speak very positively about the school and recognise that its Christian character is a vital part of their children's life. The leadership of the school has created a community in which children have the opportunity to appreciate the wonder and uniqueness of the life that they have been given.

SIAS report May 2007 Plympton St Mary's CE VA Infant School Plympton PL7 1QW