

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Sarum St Mark's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School**

Somerset Road,  
Salisbury,  
Wiltshire  
SP1 3BL

#### **Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Wiltshire

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Date of last inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006

School's unique reference number: 126364

Headteacher: Gareth Flemington

Inspector's name and number: Carole McCormack (224)

#### **School context**

This large popular junior school shares a campus with its feeder Infant school and Exeter House, a special school. The children benefit from transition practices and increasing consistency of approaches between the Infant and Junior schools; and an enriched community experience through work with Exeter House. The majority of children are from white British socially advantaged backgrounds and the number of children with Special Educational Needs is below national average. The Headteacher joined in January 2009 and inherited a school with good relationships and a strong Christian tradition. He is moving towards a more open, collegiate leadership style.

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

The vibrant warm and secure atmosphere and excellent relationships in the school support all children in developing as articulate and confident individuals. Very good teaching in Religious Education allows pupils to consider and personalise Christian values. The involvement of three Anglican churches in the life of the school make a powerful statement about spirituality being the norm for the local community in which the school is set.

#### **Established strengths**

- The personal development of the children is very good and they are supported in growing into self-confident and self-evaluative individuals
- Well-established positive relationships between all stakeholder groups support the children's outstanding personal development
- An open, transparent leadership system that parents find a real aid to working in partnership with the school

#### **Focus for development**

- For all stakeholders to use the Visioning Day in September to develop a fresh shared central Vision for the school; and to clearly identify the core Christian Values underpinning this Vision.
- To continue to develop Collective Worship so as to increase its impact through enhanced engagement and involvement of the children ; and to scaffold the children in evaluating the impact of Worship on their own spiritual development

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

The children are unusually analytical and perceptive in their application of Christian values to their own personal circumstances. They talk with understanding about the qualities which they explored in their 'Value Tree' work such as: reverence, determination, helpfulness, thoughtfulness and caring. The powerful 'Who do we think we are?' theme supported the

children in exploring their own role within the community and touched upon these central spiritual values in determining personal identity. The unusual situation whereby the school is very actively supported by three Anglican churches makes a powerful statement about the importance of Christianity in the local community: 'There's a spiritual life out there that the children plug into'. Community Action Teams enable children to focus on real practical pieces of work in the local community, for example interacting with the Exeter House community. This citizenship-based scheme, similar to the Bronze, Silver and Gold levels in the Duke of Edinburgh award, is fully administered by the children. Since joining the school two terms ago, the Headteacher has established strong working relationships with parents as evidenced by the new parent Council and the impact of the working parties on enhancing the quality of the outdoor learning environment. The impact of the Religious Education curriculum is all pervasive; and the assessment system whereby the children's personal skills and talents are highlighted and shared with colleagues is exemplary.

The Headteacher inherited a school with secure and supportive relationships and a clear Christian ethos which had developed organically over many years. The head has carefully nurtured this valuable inheritance, making gradual and gentle change. As a result of his affiliative leadership, these good relationships continue between all members of the school community, although the head has recently had occasion to stand firm about the educational rationale behind the school's organisation of classes. The school's indoor environment has started to reflect the work on Christian values being done in Religious Education and Collective Worship, although this needs to be developed so that children can revisit questions or thoughts raised in Worship or RE through interactive displays or reflective areas.

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

The Act of Worship observed during the inspection was lively and highly interactive and consequently learners' attitudes were very good: they were attentive, eager to participate and clearly understood the theme being presented. They participated beautifully in the time of reflection. However, in discussion, their comments were that they would welcome more consistent opportunities to participate in Worship through drama and discussion. They would also welcome more use of IT, with more frequent use of PowerPoint presentations and interesting visual and kinaesthetic stimuli. Currently the clergy meet with the Headteacher and Deputy to plan worship themes and this is indicative of the direct involvement of the local Churches in the life of the school. The children's comments concerning ways in which Worship could be improved are a good springboard on which to launch the 'Values for Life' Collective Worship scheme in the autumn term. There is an unusually good array of symbols which make Worship special and significant for the school community: a cross and candle and exquisite clothes for the altar table which change according to the times of the Anglican Church calendar. Singing is excellent and is led with passion and energy by a member of staff. Evaluation of Collective Worship does take place but this needs to be sharpened so that the impact of the theme on individual spiritual growth is clearly understood by learners and leaders.

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

The head inherited a school with secure relationships founded on a Christian ethos. Wisely he has built on these and has kept all stakeholders on board as he has introduced his own vision of leadership based upon 'Hardwork, Help and Honesty'. His leadership style is: 'affiliative' and 'hands on'; and there is 'a new feeling of a more open leadership'. In keeping with this approach, the Headteacher has decided to start the autumn term with a Visioning Day in which he aims to unpick and develop the clear Christian values which lie at the heart of the curriculum and which all members of the school community clearly support. Parents praise the new leadership highly for being 'accessible'. They comment that the school is 'warmer'; and like a 'big family'. This viewpoint is absolutely consistent across all stakeholder groups. Children are delighted that they now have: 'more opportunity to do things' and are 'included more'. Evaluation of these points of strength needs to be developed so that, as time progresses, issues can be identified and appropriately dealt with. The Headteacher and his deputy work very closely together and this is a key relationship in the leadership of the school. Vision and values are clearly shared and the future leadership of the school is secure. Religious Education is skilfully and thoughtfully led. Much very good work within the

community has recently started and because the practices are robust and being thoroughly introduced and embedded it appears that the partnership between the school and the wider community will continue to grow and flourish as time goes on. Several people commented that it is 'an exciting time' at St Mark's.

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