

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Shaftesbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Wincombe Lane
Shaftesbury
Dorset
SP7 8PZ

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset County Council
Dates of inspection: January 17th 2008
Date of last inspection: June 10th and 23rd 2003
School's unique reference number: 311369
Headteacher: Mrs Evelyn Donnelly. Acting head Mr Mark Loveys
Inspector's name and number: Sandra Symonds 109

School context

Shaftesbury Primary school is situated in Shaftesbury itself, an ancient hilltop town in North Dorset. It is an above average sized primary school (335 pupils) and was established initially as a Primary School in 1967. It became a First school in 1983 and reverted to a Primary in September 2003. In July 2005 Shaftesbury Primary School took over the refurbished Middle school site (King Alfred's). There are 13 classes from reception to year 6. The school has a music studio, a computer suite, a nearly completed indoor swimming pool and library. Its catchment area comprises of the Parish of St Peter. The proportion of learners with learning difficulties is lower than average as is the number of pupils that do not speak English as their first language. The headteacher was absent on long term sick leave during the SIAS Inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shaftesbury Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Learners benefit from a caring ethos and show good attitudes towards each other. The school needs now to further acknowledge that it is a church school through its documentation and the development of a more distinctive environment.

Established strengths

- Relationships between the learners
- Good support from the parents and the community
- Spiritual development which is strong in some areas of the school
- Good links with the local church

Focus for development

- Establish a secure strategy for church school self-evaluation which engages all stakeholders
- Strengthen the distinctive Christian character across the whole school by further ensuring the school's church status is more prominent on all documentation and using display to convey the school's distinctive character
- Seek support from the Diocese to develop the planning and assessment of Collective Worship as a whole school.
- To further develop spirituality across the whole school by the implementation of a policy or a spiritual focus in each subject policy.

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

Learners are happy and secure in school. They are valued as individuals and benefit from the care and concern they show to each other. This was clearly seen both on the playground and in lessons. The older children have many responsibilities to look after the younger ones and they do it well. A system of helping younger children to play with small apparatus on a rota basis in the playground and how well they helped with KS1 lunch time are just two examples. Parents find the school welcoming and secure. They feel their children are valued and that any concerns they raise are dealt with very promptly and well.

The learners believe they are treated fairly and they feel safe.

The development of spirituality is good in some areas of the school. An observed lesson in RE gave choices to the children about 'how worship should be' resulted in a very spiritual atmosphere, with the suggestions being followed up. The "I wonder" project covered by the younger children was another example. A whole school focus on the development of spirituality would give all the learners similar experiences. The school has the added strength that a member of its staff is a Muslim and talks openly about his faith to help learners encounter members from other faith communities.

The learners felt that conflicts were dealt with sensitively and speedily. The school has recognised the need to show its Christian character in a clearer light and has already begun to address this issue. A display featuring the Christian year as a pie chart was particularly effective. There are many after school clubs which the children really enjoy including a weekly Christian activity called the lighthouse attended by a number of children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

The school's policy for Collective Worship has just been rewritten and it is beginning to be implemented, including its monitoring and evaluation by staff but not learners.

Much of the documentation regarding previous themes for worship were, in the absence of the head teacher, unavailable. It was clear, however, in discussion with a foundation governor that the head teacher planned the collective worship each week around the Gospel readings from the church calendar and communicated this information to the other leaders. The legal requirements for worship are met and are in accordance with the school's Trust Deed.

The foundation governors often attend collective worship as participants. Learners seemed to enjoy it and behaved well. All teaching staff were present.

The local clergy take the worship once a week and often includes times of prayer, reflection and silence. The pupils were familiar with the Lord's prayer and the school celebrated the major festivals of the church calendar.

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

The Christian vision is beginning to be more evident in documentation and communications. Following a monitoring exercise "Christian values within the church school community", the head teacher and the local vicar were reviewing many aspects of church school distinctiveness with a view to change. The school has not yet established a sound strategy for church school self-evaluation. The local vicar had attended a day of training on schools and worship and was beginning to put new practice into place. The RE co ordinator was attending a diocesan workshop in January and had received training on implementing the new Locally Agreed Syllabus.

The links with the local church are good and the building is used as a resource to support RE. This was observed when Year 6 used the church to learn about distinctive language employed to describe areas in the church eg nave, altar.

The parents attend the Celebration assemblies when invited and a number of them join the school to celebrate the major festivals.