

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Shepton Beauchamp Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Shepton Beauchamp,
Ilminster,
Somerset,
TA19 0LQ

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: 30th April 2007

Date of last inspection: March 2002

School's unique reference number: 123773

Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Frazer

Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Shepton Beauchamp CofE First School serves its village and surrounding rural area. There are 64 children on roll who are arranged into three mixed age class groups. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is well below the national average. Most children come from a white British heritage. Accommodation is tight and the school makes use of facilities in the village to create extra space for learning both inside and outside the classroom.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shepton Beauchamp First School as a Church of England school are good.

The school has a real sense of family where relationships at all levels are based on trust. This has created a community which values the individual and gives them opportunities to thrive in their learning and personal development.

Established strengths

- Very good use is made of the outside environment to enhance the spiritual development of children and adults.
- Children can talk openly and with confidence about their beliefs and ideas.
- The Headteacher has a very clear vision of the Christian life of the school.

Focus for development

- Provide opportunities for governors, together with members of the church community, to identify the distinct Christian ethos of the school.
- Develop teacher confidence to assess children's progress in their learning from religion in RE lessons.
- Introduce systematic procedures for governors to monitor and evaluate collective worship and religious education.

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

The high quality of relationships between all in the school community gives a real sense of belonging to a family at Shepton Beauchamp. These relationships are based on trust; that everyone will be treated as a valued individual of unique importance in the eyes of God. Underpinning all of this is a shared set of Christian values, which has been a great strength to the school in both good times and in periods when the school has faced hardships. Children say that the school provides them with a safe and secure environment in which they can develop friendships with children from other classes and playtime is seen very much as a time when younger children mix freely with the older children. Attitudes towards learning are positive because children know that they will be listened to by the adults, who respect their

opinions and give them opportunities to express their views. This is particularly effective at times when the issue being discussed has relevance in the children's lives. For example, in an RE lesson, children were excited to talk about books that were special to them whilst similarly appreciating why sacred texts mean so much to believers. Standards are generally good and children with learning difficulties or disabilities make progress. Inspiring use has been made of the outside space and in particular, the development of the Rectory Garden has made a huge impact on the quality of provision both at playtimes and as an extra teaching area. Children speak very enthusiastically of the garden as a place of enjoyment and adults use it in quiet moments for spiritual renewal. By involving the whole community, this is an example of the way the school has emphasised its central importance to the village.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children are able to explain that worship is a special time when they have the opportunity to learn and talk about Jesus and how He plays a significant part in their lives. They also able to recognise the importance of worship other than at school and when in church. Prayer is a firm element of worship and indeed is used throughout the school day to reflect upon issues that are relevant to the children. A prayer box is used by children to remember family and friends who they want to hold in their prayers. At other times, children appreciate the opportunity to just sit still and be with their own thoughts, whether to thank God or to consider His message to them. Sometimes they are encouraged to do this in the Rectory Garden. There are difficulties inside the building in creating the right atmosphere because of the limited worship space available, but the school has managed to find a way of making it special by giving children time to prepare beforehand. The recent introduction of weekly collective worship in the parish church has provided a more appropriate setting and has enhanced the worshipping experience for the children. They speak warmly of these services and make connections here with their own worship times at school. Children feel at home in the church and particularly like the way that the vicar uses humour to communicate with them. Attitudes among children are mainly positive towards worship particularly when it personally involves them. Worship is recognisably Anglican in its content with familiar prayers and songs of praise which children sing with enthusiasm.

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

The Headteacher has a very clear vision that Christian values are a vital element in the life of the school. She has a passionate belief that children can benefit from learning about the teaching of Christ. This philosophy underpins the sense of trust which is at the basis of the school's ethos. Adults in the school community speak of the way that the Headteacher's Christian love for the whole school community is the thing that binds them all together. It has created a community which has a real feeling of family. The vicar is held in great affection by the children who feel very much at ease to approach him and talk to him about their thoughts and concerns. Adults recognise that he is one of the strengths of the school. Together with the governors he is very committed to developing further the school's Christian status and forging even closer links with the church community. Governors are committed to the church status of the school and have a good understanding of the issues that will take this forward. Parents have positive views about the religious nature of the school and value the way that it promotes a way of life that is based on a high moral sense. They believe that the school therefore has something special to offer their children and this has encouraged parents to be supportive of the school's mission.