

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Sherborne St John Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Lane
Sherborne St John
Basingstoke
RG24 9HT

Diocese: Winchester

Local authority: Hampshire

Dates of inspection: 3 December, 2007

Date of last inspection: 18 September, 7 and 8 October 2003

School's unique reference number: 116315

Head teacher: Mrs Karen Payne

Inspector's name and number: The Rev'd. Richard Peers 125

School context

Sherborne St John is a small school. Pupils mostly come from advantaged backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sherborne St John as a Church of England school are outstanding

Sherborne St John is a delightful village school of which its pupils and parents are justifiably proud. The school has a happy and homely atmosphere and enables pupils to achieve the very best they are capable of. The school is a caring place in which awareness of God is cultivated by prayer and worship. Despite their great privilege pupils are very aware of the needs of others and the importance of caring for people.

Established strengths

- The happy, family spirit of the school
- The Collective Worship which is profoundly Christian and gives all pupils the chance to learn about God through prayer
- The music and other extra-curricular provision

Focus for development

- To develop prayer corners and other foci for reflection in classrooms and the hall
- To liaise with all leaders of worship to ensure a common approach to themes and developing a sense of prayer
- To develop the Christian life of the Governing Body and their knowledge of the Christian life of the school

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

Pupils speak extremely positively of their teachers and of how they make learning interesting and fun. They describe how Religious Education lessons are put together in 'creative' ways to 'make you think'. Pupils particularly highlighted learning about other faiths as important to understand that 'people believe different things'.

Display throughout the school is of a very high quality. Pupils pointed out the many tapestries using verses from the Bible that they had participated in making. They believe that having Bible verses around the school helps them to remember 'the important things'.

Pupils know that caring for others is a key part of being a Christian. They are very well able to describe how the school shows its Christian care for older people in the village, for their link pupil and through other fund raising.

The school provides an extremely rich extra-curricular programme. Music is an outstanding feature of this but the provision of additional sporting activities this term has recently further

enhanced this area and is welcomed by pupils.

The quality of RE work in books is high and the school is making good use of the local syllabus. Levels are not yet being used and marking of work is not always sufficiently geared to pupils progressing in the subject.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective Worship is a key element in the school's life. A recent change of assembly times has highlighted this importance.

An outstanding act of worship very effectively used objects to 'obscure' the nativity scene as an acted out parable of all the things that obscure the real meaning of Christmas. Pupils responded extremely well to effective questioning, were engaged in the worship and stimulated by it. Pupils prayed out loud extemporarily, Key Stage 2 knew and prayed aloud the Lord's Prayer.

Worship in classrooms is also outstanding using Christian symbols to provide a focus for reflection on the meaning of Christmas. In an outstanding act of worship in one class the teacher used very effective questioning to enable pupils to explain the meaning of the christingle.

Music is used in an outstanding way to enhance worship. The choir sing very well indeed and pupils know that listening to music and to other people produce music is one way of celebrating the various skills of members of the community. Music plays a strong part in the school's extra-curricular provision and pupils know that they are very privileged to have this opportunity. The children spoke especially positively of the steel pan band.

Pupils feel the parish church is their church, they describe being able to feel 'close to God' when they are in it. They know that prayer is an important part of life and is used several times a day at school. They understand that prayer can be important when you are happy or sad and that it is a way of getting to know God better. They understand that it is as important to listen to God as to speak to him.

Prayers are said at the beginning of the day and before lunch and pupils have recently asked for prayer at the end of the day, which they enjoy and helps them to feel that things are 'finished properly'.

The quality of Collective Worship in class rooms reflects the monitoring which began this term and is exemplary and includes feedback to staff and areas for improvement as well as celebrating good practice.

ICT is used very well to support Collective Worship and in one act of worship a photograph of the school's link pupil in Indonesia was used as a focus as a child prayed for him.

Links with the parish church are good. The school uses the church for worship each term and parents are very well represented at this – pupils know that this shows they are a worshipping community. The rector leads an assembly every week and pupils describe him as being 'exceptionally interesting'. However, these acts of worship are not usually linked to the schools worship themes and are sometimes more teaching than worship. Other members of the congregation are also involved in leading worship and pupils recognise their commitment to the school.

The Bible plays a central part in the worship and pupils are able to describe how the Bible on display in the entrance area is always open at the section that will read at the Wednesday worship. Bible readings are announced with chapter and verse references and pupils could describe what this meant.

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

Pupils and parents speak extremely highly of the Acting Head teacher and deputy head teacher. They describe with enthusiasm the changes that have been made to the school this term and the considerable hard work of all the staff. Pupils understand and appreciate that teachers give of their time sacrificially.

Pupils believe they are listened to and that their views are taken seriously. They described creative weeks as being very important and how they have been given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the school grounds. They appreciate recent developments in giving them the opportunity to welcome and escort visitors on tours and recognise that this is additional responsibility that will help them. Pupils are rightly very proud of their school and recognise that they belong to a happy, Christian community.

The Governing Body is firmly committed to the Christian life of the school but does not pray

together and has not formally engaged in monitoring what happens in the school's worship. The school has recently renewed its mission statement having taken note of the views of a variety of stakeholders. Parents, staff and pupils have a clear sense of the school moving forward and changing in positive ways based on its Christian foundation. All speak highly of the opportunity to express their own views and describe the head as being very consultative. Pupils feel very at home at school and describe how the welcome each day by the acting deputy and head teacher make them feel 'joyful' at the start of every day.

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