

National Society Statutory Inspection of Schools Report

Sherston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Knockdown Road,
Sherston,
Malmesbury
Wiltshire
SN16 0NJ

Diocese of Bristol

Local Authority: Wiltshire
SIAS inspection : 28th January 2008
Previous Section 23 inspection : 7th and 9th July 2004
URN : 126356
Headteacher: Nicholas Bowditch
SIAS Inspector NS268: Mrs Muriel Griffiths

School Context

Sherston Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average size school. Over the last few years the school has grown and moved from the original Victorian building into new premises, with spacious accommodation which provides a good learning environment. The school is set in large grounds which have been attractively developed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sherston Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

It is a happy school with a strong family atmosphere. Its Christian values permeate the life of the school and relationships throughout the school community are very good.

Established Strengths

- The school's Christian values underpin its care for all individuals.
- Positive relationships exist between all members of the school community.
- Children are confident to express their feelings and opinions because they know that what they say will be valued.

Focus for Development

- Review the completed Toolkit for Anglican Schools so that governors can be involved in formally evaluating the school's performance as a Church of England school.
- Establish assessment in religious education (RE) so that children know which skills they are developing and how they can improve their work.
- Make more evident the fact that the school has a Church of England foundation

with more visible signs and displays.

The school through its distinctive Christian character is good at meeting the needs of all learners.

The school's distinctive Christian character is well reflected in the pupils' sense of well being and in their personal development. All children are secure in the knowledge that they matter as individuals. They are proud of their school and enjoy talking about what they are learning and the activities that are provided for them. They appreciate the friendly care of the staff. There are good reward systems in place with many opportunities for celebration. Pupils especially enjoy the opportunities to nominate members of their classes for special awards. They take their responsibilities for one another very seriously. Children are confident in sharing their views as they know that what they say will be valued by their peers and adults as well. This was evident in an RE lesson observed during the inspection when younger children were thinking about the church as a special place for Christians. The teacher's skilful questions helped children to voice their thoughts about what people believe. The Christian ethos impacts on the spiritual, moral, and social development of pupils, which is very good. Cultural development is excellent because of the many links with partner schools throughout the world. Many opportunities are taken to help children to think of those less fortunate than themselves, for example, 'Operation Christmas Child' and fund-raising for their partner school in Kenya. Displays, showing what pupils are learning in RE, are evident in all classrooms but explicit signs and symbols to celebrate the school's Church of England foundation are less apparent.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

The school has carefully considered the impact of collective worship on pupils and has consulted with them, through the School Council, about the effectiveness of the daily act of worship. As a result, changes have been made to the setting, content and pattern of worship during the week. Collective worship is important in the life of the school and daily acts of worship now take a variety of forms with some for the whole school and others for smaller groups. Pupils describe the daily act of worship as a 'special time' and are enjoying learning new worship songs from recently purchased books. Pupils especially enjoy the weekly visit of local church members to lead 'Open the Book' worship when they act out a story from the Bible. Children have been able to form good relationships with these visitors, increasing their experience of the Christian church and those who belong to it. They say that they like being involved in such ways as acting out the story, Bible readings and in prayer. Major church festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter are celebrated in church which give children a better understanding of the importance of these festivals to Christians. Older pupils were exploring Christian worship in an RE lesson during the inspection. The teacher had provided an imaginative range of activities, such as percussion instruments, art resources and poetry writing so that pupils could explore different ways that help to inspire Christians in worship. Pupils recognise the importance and value of prayer in a variety of situations, knowing that it is a means by which to communicate with God. At the end of the school day, there are opportunities for prayer and reflection before the children go home. They are developing a good understanding of Anglican traditions and join in the Lord's Prayer during the daily act of worship. The Grace and Blessing are used regularly in the daily act of worship.

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

The headteacher and governors have a shared commitment to the Christian foundation of the school. Adults are good role models and provide direction for high expectations of behaviour and care and respect for individuals. The Vicar and Curate are regular visitors to the school and are involved in both the teaching of RE and leading worship.

Foundation governors contribute to the life of the school in a variety of ways. There are mutually supportive links between the school, local churches and the community. For example, events in school are mentioned in the Parish magazine and the school choir sang at both the Congregational Church and the Anglican Crib Service. The school has a linked website with the Parish Church, which gives a clear indication of the school's church foundation. The Vicar provides much valued pastoral support for all members of the school community. Through further self-evaluation the school would be able to identify priorities that will enable it to improve its distinctiveness as a church school. The subject leader for RE and collective worship is very enthusiastic and provides good leadership for her colleagues. She is currently beginning to introduce new assessment procedures in RE so that pupils can see how their learning can move forward. The shared commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to the children and their families contribute to the very evident family feeling in the school. This is much appreciated by parents.

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