

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Shillingstone Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Knapps
Shillingstone
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 0RA

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Dorset
Dates of inspection: 11th December 2007
Date of last inspection: 2004
School's unique reference number: 113813
Headteacher: Mr. Brian South
Inspector's name and number: The Rev. Mary Garrard 19

School context

This is a four-class village school at one end of a long village. The church, which is seen as an extension to the school building, is accessed by a path leading directly from the school. The school building is inadequate for the needs of the school. There are plans to build a new school at the other end of the village but as yet no date has been fixed. This has led to a feeling of marking time. Numerous extensions have been added to the original nineteenth century building and although staff have worked hard with displays in corridors as well as classrooms there are areas that are needful of redecoration. The hall is particularly small and shabby. The school serves the local village where there is some local authority housing as well as a variety of privately owned housing. Some pupils come from further afield from parental choice, often because there have been educational or other difficulties in previous schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shillingstone Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school is satisfactory

This is a happy school to which pupils are enthusiastic to come. Parents of all persuasions and none feel welcomed and listened to. The church, which is next door, is seen by pupils and staff as an extension to the school building and church staff are supportive of the school. Teaching and non-teaching staff nurture all pupils and provide for individual needs. Pupils are encouraged to care for each other in a supportive way. Teaching staff are working hard to provide an exciting and thought-provoking RE curriculum supported by the new Dorset scheme of work. More work needs to be done to provide meaningful worship and thought needs to be given on the surroundings in the place of worship. Completion of a toolkit would enable staff to focus on the pupils' spiritual needs.

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

As committed Christians the staff nurtures each and every child and help them reach their potential. Under the heading of RE in the school's prospectus the following claim is made: "In all that we do, we aim to develop in our children self-esteem, sensitivity, respect, open-mindedness, critical awareness, appreciation and, most importantly, a sense of wonder." Evidence supports that the school is achieving this aim. Parents spoke of the way in which older children care for younger ones and peer mediation is in place, with children having been trained as mediators by a TA. Pupils responded sensitively and showed respect for each other. Links with the local church are good but there is nowhere in the building or the grounds where children can go to be still and reflect in order to enhance their spiritual development. Evidence of the school's Christian overtly character in the general areas is hard to find, however, the Christian ethos is reflected through a sense of community and value for all.

Established strengths

- Relationships within the school are good. Children support their peers and are supported effectively by all staff. Parents speak warmly of good communication and care. All adults are supportive one to another.
- The RE/Collective Worship co-ordinator is introducing new ideas effectively and contributing to the emerging spiritual ethos of the school
- Links with the local church are strong

Focus for development

- For the school to establish self-evaluation regarding its role and distinctiveness as a Church school
- Develop the quality of KS2 worship
- Create opportunities for a worship focus in the school hall or elsewhere

The impact of Collective Worship on the School Community is satisfactory

Worship, during the inspection, took place in the church led by the Licensed Lay Minister and does so on the same day each week. The worship was lively, and participatory. It was mindful of the needs of a very mixed age range of pupils. Children showed a good understanding of the meaning of Advent and joined in the action songs enthusiastically. A number of the children have strong links with the church as they belong to the junior choir, or to the Sunday School or both. These activities were mentioned with enthusiasm when I spoke to a group of Y5/6 children. The impact of worship for KS2 in school is poor as evidenced in discussions with this group. Pupils felt that worship was not providing a stimulus for their spiritual development because of uninspiring provision.

The collective worship co-ordinator has evaluated KS1 worship as lively and interactive with KS2 worship being a focus for development in 2008. The governor responsible for Collective Worship (and RE) has not yet been present at any school worship. There are few opportunities to explore the Anglican traditions for example; the Lord's Prayer and the Grace are said occasionally.

The effectiveness of the Religious Education is good

RE in a KS1 class and a KS2 class were observed. The lessons were on an Advent/Christmas theme and both demonstrated a very carefully thought out scheme of work that will build on children's prior knowledge of Christmas year on year. The children were responsive and fully focussed throughout each lesson and each teacher was very aware of those children who will require additional help to grasp a particular concept. The theme of the KS1 lesson was that we can give a present that does not cost anything and a sparkly box was passed around with a tiny red heart in the bottom. The question asked was "What was the person who gave me this saying to me?" Most children grasped the concept of love. A wall display in each classroom has been created to enhance each particular theme and develop children's thinking.

No lessons were observed in the Foundation Stage class. Evidence of good RE for this class did include the painting of the nativity the children had produced on the wall and the "home corner" which was the stable in Bethlehem.

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

There is little evidence that this is a Church of England school with no church school self evaluation in place. The leadership and management need a clear articulated vision of what church school distinctiveness is and how it impacts on their school. The National Society recommended 'toolkit' has not been completed. In addition the evaluation for the spiritual side of school life has not been included in the SEF; therefore, it is difficult to ascertain where the school sees itself to be or where it believes it is going. Under the heading of SMSC, in the prospectus, the moral, social and cultural development is commented on but not the spiritual. There is no doubt that the children in this school are nurtured and helped to reach their full potential. Relationships are good and special needs provision appears to be sound.

The school council is listened to and some of their ideas are put in place. The children are polite and friendly and have a working knowledge of the church year. The co-ordinator for RE and Collective Worship has been in this role for less than a year. She is enthusiastic and has already worked with the governor for RE/Worship to make changes relating to RE. There is a wall display in most classrooms related to the current RE theme but visible evidence of church school distinctiveness is minimal. The co-ordinator and the Head Teacher need governor support to move RE and CW forward.

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