

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Dominic Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Dominick

Saltash

Cornwall

PL12 6SU

Diocese: Truro

Local Authority: Cornwall

Date of inspection: 22nd November 2007

Date of last inspection: June 1999

School's Unique Reference Number: 112029

Headteacher: Mrs Jayne Biddle

Inspector's name and NS number: Mr Chris Williamson 290

School context

St Dominic School is a small rural school, with 67 children on roll, serving the local community, the surrounding rural area and nearby towns. There is high pupil mobility, particularly in Key Stage 2. There are 23% of the children on the Special Needs Register. No children are from ethnic minority groups and 8% are entitled to free school meals. There have been a considerable number of changes to teaching staff in upper Key Stage 2 over the past two years but the situation has now stabilised. A new headteacher was seconded to the school in January 2006 and subsequently was appointed to the permanent post in March 2006. The school had been in special measures and was removed from this status in October 2006. There has been much improvement to the building and site since 2005 to create a favourable learning environment and facilities.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Dominic Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The distinctiveness of St Dominic School as a church school is demonstrated through Christian being lived out on a daily basis. The school places great emphasis on caring for and nurturing the whole child and children's personal development is outstanding. The effective leadership of the headteacher and governors, together with the commitment of the staff and excellent links with the church, mean that the school is well placed to improve further.

Established strengths

- The Christian ethos that pervades the school, which is also strongly reflected in the school's motto of 'Learning and Caring Together'
- The Christian leadership of the school
- Church school links
- Collective worship

Focus for development

- To embed the increased involvement of children in all aspects of collective worship
- To develop further the differentiation of work in RE
- To develop systems of assessment in RE which will aid children's learning
- To evaluate the school more formally by gaining wider community feedback regarding the distinctiveness of the school as a church school

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

The Christian ethos pervades all aspects of school life. As one child said to their parent, "This is my first proper church school". Children feel valued and special. There is a real commitment to developing the whole child, with a strong emphasis on valuing and celebrating good behaviour and achievement. Achievements are celebrated in many effective ways, for example through the 'Boasting Butterfly' display. This results in children with good self esteem and self confidence. Strong Christian values such as valuing and respecting each other are evident in the children's behaviour and these values encourage children to flourish. For example saying sorry, fairness, compassion, forgiveness and having a fresh start are all evident in conflict resolution. Children feel safe and know that their views and opinions are listened to carefully. Last year a school forum was established to discuss immediate issues of interest and this has resulted in the establishment of a school council. The school council has a positive impact on the children, for example improving the quality and raising the profile of the 'Top Table' by buying special cutlery and crockery. This is a system where lunchtime supervisors choose children, whose behaviour has been particularly good, to eat lunch with the headteacher. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Everyone works collaboratively and there is an ethos of trust and respect throughout the school. Children work cooperatively, when appropriate. Children's spiritual development is outstanding. It is encouraged by a wide variety of signs and symbols, including excellent displays which acknowledge the school as a Christian community. There are many examples of times of reflection which are used by the children with great effect. Children's cultural development is greatly encouraged by, for example, their links with Kenyan and Jamaican schools and activities weeks celebrating the Cornish culture. Fund raising activities, such as for a new roof for the Jamaican school, have a real impact on children's awareness, understanding and development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is important in the life of the school and was one of the areas developed during last year with improvements continuing this year. The improvements, which are rooted in Christian principles, have had a significant impact on children's personal development. All staff now attend collective worship and take a role in leading worship on a regular basis. Children have recently started to be involved in the evaluation of collective worship and this has led to a greater involvement of children participating in and leading worship. It has also raised the profile and importance of worship in the school. Planning is jointly undertaken with the clergy on a termly basis ensuring that themes reflect the major festivals in the church year. Children listen well, participate willingly and all children sing enthusiastically. The opportunities that exist for reflection and prayer, both planned and spontaneous, have a significant impact on children's spiritual development. Children enjoy the responsibility of setting up the space for collective worship such as preparing the music, OHP and the candle. Worship has been further enhanced by the children making copies of their hands in felt, which have been mounted on the altar frontal. Children appreciate the range of visitors who lead collective worship, particularly the 'JUMP' team from The University College Plymouth. Collective worship has also enabled and encouraged children to reflect on world wide issues, such as fair trade and the work of charities. Strong links exist with the local parish church. Children participate enthusiastically in church in a wide range of prepared items at all the major Christian festivals and at a special service held every six weeks. Children experience a variety of traditional and modern prayers and hymns and are particularly enthusiastic about the school Eucharist held once a year.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Children are making satisfactory progress in religious education (RE) and standards are broadly in line with expectations. Now that the school has been removed from special measures the school is making RE a priority area for improvement. Planning has been reviewed to ensure a balance between the attainment targets and the school recognises the need to develop systems of assessment. Marking of work, however, is used to good effect. The school also recognises the need to embed differentiation. Lessons are well planned, linking to children's previous knowledge. Effective use is made of deep and searching questions. A wide variety of learning strategies are being used effectively; for example the

use of 'talk partners', where children share their learning, is having a significant impact on children's learning. Children enjoy RE and focus clearly on what they are trying to learn. Children readily contribute and ask thought provoking questions about faith and its impact on the lives of others, not necessarily on their own faith. The school has developed a 'Reflective Space' where children can write prayers and respond creatively. This is used particularly by Key Stage 2 children. Children's moral development is good, with topical issues being discussed in RE. For example children recently studied the National Trust's plans to flood the Tamar valley, which led the children to an appreciation of caring for God's creation. The school follows the Cornwall RE syllabus, with at least 75% of time being allocated to Christianity. RE promotes the distinctive Christian character of the school, for example children visit the local church to learn practically about infant baptism. A range of visitors and visits enhance children's learning in RE. RE is now seen as important in the school, for example the school has reduced the size of RE teaching groups.

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

The headteacher and foundation governors have worked hard to ensure that the school's Christian foundation is evident in the life of the school. The distinctiveness of the school as a church school is evident in the development of collective worship, the promotion of church - school links and in communications with parents. Everyone works together in an atmosphere of mutual trust, care and respect which strongly reflects the school motto of 'Learning and Caring Together'. The school has explored its distinctiveness as a church school and all stakeholders have developed their understanding and benefited from reflecting on what it means to be part of a church school. Staff feel valued and are fully involved and supportive in putting the vision into practice. The school has started to provide opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in evaluating the progress of the school as a church school. For example children's views have recently been sought, which have led to changes being made to collective worship. Previously much evaluation was completed informally and the school now recognises the need to establish more formal systems of evaluation regarding the distinctiveness of the school as a church school. Once these measures are embedded the leadership and management of the school, as a church school, is likely to be outstanding. Strong and effective links exist between the church and the school. Members of the church help children prepare for services and ask for reports on the life of the school so that they can actively support what is happening. The PCC is actively involved in the school, for example they have raised money to buy music which is used in collective worship, through annual coffee mornings held in school. Links with the whole community are equally strong, for example older people are invited to have lunch in school every week.