

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St. Mary's and St. Peter's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Copse Lane,  
Ilton,  
Ilminster  
TA19 9EX

#### **Diocese: Bath and Wells**

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008

Date of last inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2003

School's unique reference number: 123741

Headteacher: Mrs Karen Brooker

Inspector's name and number: Susan Walker 391

#### **School context**

St. Mary's and St. Peter's First School is a village school of 62 children and is unique in that it is situated on two sites. The school serves two villages one of which includes a small traveller community. The great majority of children are of white British origin. There have been considerable changes in headship in the recent past. The present headteacher has recently been appointed to the permanent post following a term as acting headteacher.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Mary's and St. Peter's First School as a Church of England school are satisfactory.**

St. Mary' and St. Peter's school has maintained its distinctive Christian Character as a Church school after a difficult period of temporary leadership. There is a clear vision of how the two bases can be brought closer together in developing this distinctiveness that is shared by school leaders. Strategies for implementing this vision have been identified but have yet to be put in place.

#### **Established strengths**

- The caring and loving relationships between all adults and children that are based on Christian values and recognised and appreciated by parents.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher who is supported by Governors in her vision of how to improve the Christian character of the school.
- The good manners and behaviour of all children.

#### **Focus for development**

- Establish rigorous strategies for monitoring and evaluating the impact of Worship and Religious Education on the everyday lives of children.
- Establish formal strategies for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work in maintaining and developing Christian distinctiveness.
- Establish consistent procedures for developing mutually supportive links between both Parishes and their school bases.
- Establish strategies for assessing children's progress in Religious Education as they move through the school.

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

Children are happy and secure in school. They are valued as individuals and benefit from a warm family atmosphere and from the loving relationships between all members of the school community. Staff at both bases contribute well to sustaining the school's Christian ethos

through providing good role models for children that are based on Christian values. Because of this children behave very well at all times and talk about the need to forgive and “not to do it again”! There is a culture of praise and reward for achievement in all areas of the children’s development and this contributes to the high self esteem and independence of the majority of children. Children are very appreciative of the opportunity that the School Council gives them to make a contribution to the life of the school. Meetings are divided equally between the two bases and this does much to establish a bond between them as do the very popular shared activity days. The willingness of older children to care for younger ones is appreciated by parents. This care was demonstrated during a Religious Education lesson when year two children were asked to help the younger ones to write prayers. However, whilst this resulted in very good social development and some mature prayers from young children there was insufficient challenge and extension for the older more able ones. There are good opportunities to learn about the nature of prayer during Collective Worship and children say grace before lunch. Whilst this has a positive impact on the spiritual aspect of children’s development there are no other consistent opportunities for them to pray at other times during the school day. The curriculum provides children with a range of opportunities to promote cultural development and knowledge of some World Religions but there is no evidence that they are helped to understand the multi ethnic nature of their own society. The school has worked hard to establish a stimulating environment in both bases but displays of work sometimes lack evidence of children’s independent creativity and the use of Christian symbols in classrooms and shared areas is inconsistent.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.**

Collective Worship plays an important part in the life of the school in both bases. Children make gains in their spiritual development because of the opportunities that they have for prayer and quiet reflection and they have a mature understanding of the purpose of prayer. During the inspection they were helped to focus their prayers in collective worship led by the Vicar through lighting candles as they asked God’s help for their school and its community. Children know the Lord’s Prayer and recall bible stories that they have been told. They can explain how these have helped them in their everyday lives, for example that they are taught to “believe in yourself”. Despite having to use classroom space at one base, great care is taken to ensure that acts of worship take place in a well-organised and peaceful environment. Children demonstrated their awareness that this is a special time during the inspection as they entered the room quietly and settled quickly to listen with respect. They are encouraged to take an active part in worship. Children say that they enjoy reading and singing songs during Church Services to celebrate Christian festivals. Valuable opportunities are provided for the two bases to join together on these occasions with the parish churches being used alternately. Links with the community are built as parents, governors and some parishioners join the children in celebration. Although collective worship themes broadly follow the Church year and Bible stories are used to good effect to link worship to the everyday lives of children, there is no whole school rolling programme providing detailed planning and guidance for worship leaders. This results in inconsistent provision of worship between the two bases. There is no rigorous or consistent monitoring or evaluation of the effectiveness of Worship. Whilst good support for leading worship is provided by the clergy at one base, pressure of work prevents equal provision at the other. There are very limited opportunities for visiting Christian leaders to give children a wide experience of different forms of worship.

**The leadership and management of the school as a Church school is satisfactory**

The school’s documentation and policies proclaim its Christian character and are underpinned by Christian values. The vision of the newly appointed headteacher and of governors to embed these values is made clear in the School Development Plan. A recently adopted teaching and learning style focuses on the development of the whole child through a cross curriculum topic based approach. Guidance on using learning strategies to support the spiritual dimension of children’s development is at an early stage of development. The Church is very well used by both bases for learning about the building and its history, but opportunities for children to learn about the celebrations, for example baptism, that take place in Church are inconsistent. Governors are very supportive of the school but have no rigorous

and consistent role in monitoring and evaluating the school as a Church school. This has been identified as a priority in the school development plan. Governors have received training in establishing a distinctively Christian environment and ethos but this has yet to be disseminated to teaching staff. School leaders have ensured that all members of the community are asked their views and parents say that they have many formal and informal opportunities to express their opinions. They are confident that their suggestions are considered. It is too soon for planned improvements to have been fully implemented but through discussion with members of the school community and in documentation it is clear that there are good strategic plans in place to establish consistent approaches to developing both bases into an effective Church school.

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