

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St. Marychurch Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary and Nursery School**

Hartop Road  
St. Marychurch,  
Torquay  
TQ1 4QH

#### **Diocese: Exeter**

Local authority: Torbay  
Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
Date of last inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> May 2004  
School's unique reference number: 113473  
Headteacher: Mr. Paul Woodhouse  
Inspector's name and number: Sue Walker 391

#### **School context**

St. Marychurch Primary and Nursery School is a large urban school of 309 learners, the majority of whom are of white British origin. A quarter of learners come from outside the immediate area. Nine learners have English as their second language. There are 62 learners who have special educational needs, 10 of whom have statements. This is above the national average. The headteacher retires at the end of this term. A new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher have recently been appointed.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Marychurch Primary and Nursery School as a Church of England school are good.**

The headteacher is well supported by the Governors and the clergy in sustaining an ethos that has Christian values at its heart. The impact of these values is evident in the strong caring relationships between all members of the school community. These relationships are recognised and appreciated by all the learners and their parents.

#### **Established strengths**

- The good quality of relationships between all adults and learners that are based on Christian values.
- The positive impact of worship on the spiritual dimension of learners' development.
- The good Christian role models provided by all adults, led by the commitment of the headteacher to establish a Christian community.

#### **Focus for development**

- Improve learners' cultural development by providing more opportunities for first hand experience of the places of worship of faiths and cultures other than their own.
- Establish a monitoring programme so that the effectiveness of the work of the school as a Church School can be evaluated by Governors and staff.
- Establish consistent strategies for marking and assessing learners' work in religious education.

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

The school demonstrates a total commitment to developing loving and caring relationships between all members of its community. These relationships are firmly founded on Christian values. This is seen in the good behaviour of learners. It is demonstrated in the respect that they show for their teachers because of the good role models provided for them. It is reflected in the way in which everyone shares the common aim of providing for the needs of all learners. It is recognised by parents who speak of the “good moral values” taught to their children. It is demonstrated through the confidence shown by learners as they talk about their presentation to the Torbay SACRE. Parents appreciate the good links between the school and the parish, especially the opportunities for them to join their children at Church services. Learners are unanimous in their praise of the care given to them by staff and are proud of the way that they are given responsibilities to care for each other and to help in the everyday running of the school. The school successfully supports learners’ spiritual development across the curriculum, for example in teaching them their responsibility as stewards of God’s world. Good links have been established with the community through events such as the community concert in which the school played an active part. The community join with learners’ in celebrating their cultural past through the popular May Day celebrations. The whole school environment successfully proclaims its Church status through stimulating displays and good use of Christian symbols.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school and has a positive impact on the spiritual dimension of learners’ development. This is seen in the mature understanding that they have of the purpose of prayer and in their confidence as they talk about how prayer has helped them in their everyday lives. A moving example was given by a boy during the inspection as he spoke of how “talking to God” had helped him during a time of family sadness. Good opportunities are given for reflection during worship and this is seen in the deep thoughts contained in prayers written by learners. For example, in a prayer for Palm Sunday a boy asks God to help him “understand what Jesus was preparing for on Palm Sunday”. Learners say that they enjoy daily acts of worship. They know these times are special and that the lighting of a candle focuses their minds on thinking about Jesus. They can explain that “Jesus is the light of the world” and that “He is with me in my heart”. Good support is given to learners’ social and emotional development through acts of worship that focus on Christian values being at the heart of human relationships. Learners demonstrated positive attitudes to worship whilst they took part in a Church Service during the inspection. All age groups listened attentively, joined in responses and in prayer confidently and participated enthusiastically in drama and song. There are very strong links between the Parish and the school. Opportunities to worship in church are outstanding. All Key Stage 2 learners take part in a Eucharist that is suited to their age every other week. Christian festivals are celebrated at services where learners are well supported by parents, by governors and by members of the congregation. Whilst Governors give good support to school worship they have no formal means of evaluating the impact of worship on learners spiritual development or of its impact on their everyday lives.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.**

Standards achieved in religious education are average and they are generally in line with those achieved in other subjects. Standards of recording of learners’ work are inconsistent and do not always reflect the positive attitudes to the subject seen in lessons during the inspection. During these lessons learners’ attitudes were good because teachers had provided a variety of interesting activities that challenged them to reflect on their feelings and to talk about their thoughts. Activities had a positive impact on learners’ spiritual development through providing opportunities for reflection. This was seen in a year five lesson where learners were asked to write questions that they wished to ask characters involved in the Crucifixion. A mature level of reflection was revealed in questions such as “Why did you let it

happen?" to a Roman soldier and "What was it like to see your Father again", to Jesus. Creative links are made between religious education and other subjects. For example learners speak enthusiastically about their dramatisation of the Old Testament creation story and write their own creation stories in literacy and this has a positive impact to their attitudes to the subject. Learners demonstrate a good knowledge of Christianity, especially their understanding of the significance of festivals, from an early age. Foundation stage children were able to explain that "Jesus was killed by the Romans on the cross" and that "He came alive". Learners of all ages are beginning to develop knowledge of world religions, in particular of Buddhism. However, their knowledge of other major religions, for example Islam and Judaism is less secure. Their religious education provides them with few opportunities to develop their understanding of the place of world religions in British culture and very little experience of places of worship of other faiths. Teachers are beginning to make assessments of learners' progress in religious education although this is not consistently managed across the school and teachers' marking does not always tell learners what they have to do to improve their work.

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

The headteacher is strongly committed to acting out the school's Christian vision and he is very well supported by Governors. There are very effective links with the parish church, led by the vicar, who is a frequent visitor to school. Governors say that they have had good opportunities to reaffirm their vision through the recent process of appointing new school leaders. They are very supportive of the school's evaluation of the impact of its work on the lives of learners but there are no planned opportunities for leaders at all levels to inform their evaluation more effectively through the structured monitoring of religious education and worship. The school has good strategies for consulting parents about their views and parents say that the headteacher and staff listen to their ideas and keep them well informed about school events. However, there are no opportunities provided for them to contribute their views about the school as a Christian community. School leaders recognise the need to develop more consistent assessment in religious education to help learners to improve their work. The school is successful in creating a vision that is shared by everyone. It has Christian values and beliefs at the core of its work.

SIAS report March 2008, St. Marychurch C.E. Voluntary Aided Primary and Nursery School, Hartop Road, St. Marychurch, Torquay. TQ1 4QH