

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

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

Oakfield Road

Bridgwater

TA6 7LX

#### **Diocese: Bath & Wells**

Local authority: Somerset County Council

Dates of inspection: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008

Date of last inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> February, 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> March 2004

School's unique reference number: 123784

Headteacher: Helen Rooks

Inspector's name and number: Muriel Griffiths - 268

#### **School context**

St Mary's Church School has 295 pupils on roll. The school is situated in a quiet residential area on the western side of Bridgwater and is some distance away from the Parish Church, which is in the town centre. The accommodation consists of the main building and a number of temporary classrooms with a large playing field, a 'quiet area' which is equipped with picnic tables. The grounds have been attractively developed with an environmental area with a pond and an adventure trail.

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

There is a strong emphasis on pupils' social, spiritual, moral and cultural development. Christian values are central to the life of the school and as a result pupils' personal development is excellent

#### **Established strengths**

- The strong emphasis on personal development underpinned by the Christian values of care and concern.
- The value placed on the development of the whole child.
- The quality of relationships between all members of the school community.

#### **Focus for development**

- Include, as part of the school's development plan, a detailed action plan for developing its Christian foundation to realise the headteacher's vision.
- Introduce recording, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by various members of the school community to discover its impact on learners.
- Celebrate the school's Church of England foundation with more visible signs and displays around the school.

#### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good in the way it meets the needs of all learners**

Pupils feel valued and special. They are proud of their school and talk confidently about their work and the different activities provided for them. They feel secure and happy and are keen to discuss what they are learning. The school places a high level of importance on the needs of the whole child. Christian values are central to the life of the school and as a result pupils' personal development is excellent. They are confident and their self esteem is high. Issues are dealt with sensitively and promptly. The school uses its Christian character to promote the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of learners, especially through collective worship and RE (religious education). There are good reward systems in place with many

opportunities for celebration. Pupils are delighted to be entered into the 'Golden Book', to be invited to a headteacher's tea party or to receive 'golden pennies' for good behaviour at lunchtime. Pupils demonstrate a clear sense of responsibility and a considerate attitude to others throughout the school. Older children are encouraged to help model positive play if children experience difficulties in the playground. Year 6 pupils all train to be peer mediators and help other pupils to sort out any problems at playtimes. Many opportunities are taken to help children to think of those less fortunate than themselves. For example, the school has sponsored a child in Kenya and raised money for furniture for schools in Zimbabwe.

Pupils 'have a voice' through the School Council and they have been consulted about the school's 'Behaviour Policy'. They also choose a charity each year for the school to support by fund raising. They are delighted that their suggestions are not only considered, but also acted upon, such as when a coned area was requested on the field to prevent children getting hurt by footballs. Displays showing what the children are learning in RE are evident in 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**

Collective worship is important in the life of the school. The daily acts of worship take a variety of forms, some for the whole school and others for smaller groups. Classes take it in turns to write prayers for the weekly 'Golden Assembly'. Pupils know that the candle is lit during worship to 'remind us of God when we pray'. In an act of worship observed during the inspection, pupils joined in all elements enthusiastically. Children especially enjoy worship in their own classrooms as this gives them opportunities to be actively involved. Parents value opportunities to attend these acts of worship and their attendance has increased at the termly services held in church to celebrate major Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter. Children learn about Bible stories, religious traditions and Christian values through a carefully planned programme. The Vicar makes a significant contribution to the programme of worship. He is involved in planning with the headteacher and regularly comes into school to lead the daily act of worship. Occasionally, governors attend collective worship but no formal evaluation is taking place to inform the school about its impact on children. Year 6 leavers attend the Leavers' Day at Wells Cathedral each year. This provides valuable opportunities for pupils to increase their experience of the Christian Church and those who belong to it. The school has enjoyed a visit from a Zambian Bishop and this helped children's appreciation of the worldwide church.

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

The commitment to live according to Christian values is strong and permeates all aspects of the life of the school. The headteacher provides good leadership, has a clear vision of how she wants to enhance the Christian character of the school and the direction it will take. This needs to be given higher priority and to be supported more fully by all the governors. The school recognises that in order to develop further as a church school, all governors need to work together in evaluating the school's performance as a Church of England school. Adults at the school are very good role models and there are high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Relationships are very good between all members of the school community. The RE subject leader is enthusiastic and effective. The Vicar is fully involved in the school both formally and informally and provides much valued pastoral support. There are mutually supportive links between the school and the church. For example, pupils make Christingles for the church at Christmas and posies for Mothers' Day. Children from the Gardening Club have decorated the font at the church with flowers for a special town celebration. Parishioners help in school and the church provides booklets for children starting school. Parents appreciate opportunities to give their opinions about the school. They are confident that the school provides a caring environment, inspired by Christian principles and they appreciate the school's Christian ethos.