

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

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

Skilling Hill Road,  
Bridport,  
Dorset,  
DT6 4QS

#### **Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Dorset

Date of inspection: December 10th 2007

Date of last inspection: 17th - 20th March 2003

School's unique reference number: 113757

Headteacher: Mrs Kay Rawlings

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jenny Pestridge (153)

#### **School context**

The school is situated on the outskirts of Bridport on a large site. Learners attend from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. There are currently 207 learners, although the number on roll fluctuates considerably. There is a successful preschool on site, and a Children's Centre is due to be built on the same site by 2008, catering for 0 to 11 years.

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

The partnership between the new Headteacher, the Church and governors is positive and effective. As a result, learners are proud of the school's links with the church. A rigorous review of religious education and collective worship, by the coordinator and senior management, is taking place. This reflects the school's revision of its Church of England foundation. The review is resulting in a renewed emphasis on the Christian character of the school.

#### **Established strengths**

- The commitment of the Headteacher, supported by the church and the governing body, to continue to re-define the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The enthusiasm of the coordinator of religious education and collective worship to use strategic planning and in-service training to develop these areas of the curriculum.
- The emphasis on creative teaching strategies to develop the confidence of learners, across the curriculum.

#### **Focus for development**

- Create a strategy to monitor the overall Christian ethos of the school, and include all stakeholders.
- Review the mission statements and aims, in order to reflect the Church of England foundation of the school.
- Review the policy for spiritual development; plan, monitor and evaluate opportunities for this aspect across the curriculum.
- Introduce a formal monitoring and evaluation process for collective worship.

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

Learners feel safe and cared for, and because of this they are happy and enjoy school. The school has previously chosen to adopt an implicit approach to Christian values. An explicit context for the care offered by the school is currently being developed. The learners particularly appreciate the way the teachers provide opportunities to help them at difficult times. For example, the Buddy system at playtime and Bubble Time during lessons. This means that potential problems are resolved quickly. Learners are able to make decisions about their school life. This approach is a reflection of the relationships between staff and learners. As a result of an effective school council request, learners are proud of their playground equipment. Opportunities for spiritual development are varied. They are not currently planned, monitored or evaluated across the curriculum. The policy does not reflect the classroom practice observed. The lessons emphasised creative thinking and valued learners' opinions. There is an emphasis on giving worth to how children feel about their learning. In a Key Stage 2 literacy lesson, learners had studied 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. They were given outstanding opportunities through drama and movement, to express their emotional understanding of rules for living. In Key Stage 1 religious education, the use of a Christian visitor to the lesson provided an opportunity for the spiritual development of learners. They considered why people give gifts at Christmas. The testimony of the visitor emphasised learning from religion. The quality of displays overall reflects the school's emphasis on creativity. However, an explicit Christian context for learning is underdeveloped. Some public areas and the majority of classrooms do not reflect the Christian character of the school. The school is in the process of planning the development of the outdoor environment. These include plans to enhance opportunities for spiritual development, such as through a sensory garden. Currently, there is no strategy to assess the ways in which the Christian character of the school meets the needs of all learners.

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

The school has begun a recent process for a review of collective worship. This is resulting in positive developments, for example, the use of 'The Values for Life' pack for planning. The new rota, which involves visiting Clergy, represents good progress. This means that learners are experiencing a range of Anglican faith and practice. Weekly classroom worship is not currently monitored. There is no overall formal monitoring and evaluation process of collective worship. As a result, the impact made by collective worship on the spiritual development of learners is not being used to inform developments. The collective worship coordinator is enthusiastic. She is committed to making worship a priority in the life of the school. The current review of prayer during the school day reflects a concern shared by senior managers, Clergy and governors. In the acts of worship observed, prayer was limited. However, time was allowed for reflection, which provided an opportunity for spiritual development. The content of the theme, on the Creation story, was well planned. The use of visual aids based on the theme provided a focus. This meant that learners were enabled to discuss the question of miracles. Learners enjoy collective worship, which was reflected in their singing. The presence of all staff increased the sense of being together as a family.

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

The new Headteacher, religious education coordinator, curate and chair of governors make a core group, who are committed to redefining the Christian character of the school. Their enthusiasm and commitment is resulting in early signs of development. One expression of this growing understanding is the use of the National Society Toolkit. It has recently been used to begin to audit the school's Church of England foundation. The Toolkit is helping the leadership and management team to identify areas which are now currently under review. This is because some learners find the subject lacking in creativity, with an undue emphasis on written tasks in Key Stage 2. One learner said, "This is a creative school, but not in RE".

The use of learning from religion is underdeveloped in some classes. However, the coordinator has identified strategic initiatives. The use of the creative and expressive arts is beginning to make an impact on some learners. The partnership with the Church, especially with the Curate, is dynamic and vibrant. This partnership is beginning to shape the school's long-term plans for developing a confident Christian identity. The school plans to link with the Church in joint projects for the national, 'Hope 08' initiative. This is a positive example of the school's renewed enthusiasm to make explicit the Church of England foundation of the school.

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