

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

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

Higher Trehaverne,  
Truro,  
Cornwall,  
TR1 3RJ

#### **Diocese: Truro**

Local authority: Cornwall

Date of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> November 2007

Date of last inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup> September 2001

School's unique reference number: 111990

Headteacher: Mrs Dianne Jones

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

#### **School context**

The school is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of Truro. Learners travel to the school from across the city. The school benefits from extensive refurbishment, which took place in 2005, and has a large pleasant site including a playing field. The 200 learners are in the majority White British, with 5 learners for whom English is an additional language. The school has a new Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher, both of whom were appointed in 2006.

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

The school's Christian ethos is now providing a clear context for the care offered by the school, where learners are encouraged "to flourish and grow in the image of God." The school addresses the needs of all learners, through providing a creative curriculum, from a Christian world view.

#### **Established strengths**

- The leadership of the Headteacher in re-defining the Christian ethos of the school.
- The emphasis given by all the staff to collective worship, and to prayer, in the day-to-day life of the school.
- The relationship with the Parish Church and the wider Christian community, maintained by the Methodist Minister and Foundation governor, during the absence of a Parish Priest.

#### **Focus for development**

- Involve learners in the formal planning and evaluation of collective worship.
- Revise the wording in the collective worship policy, in order to reflect the current practice of wholly Christian worship.
- Develop the current monitoring strategies in collective worship and religious education, by including all stakeholders in an overall process.

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

This is a Church of England school with a clear and welcoming Christian ethos. It is also inclusive. One learner explained, "You don't have to be a Christian to come here." Learners are proud of the fact that other faiths are represented in the school. They are able to explain the importance of both knowledge and understanding of world religions, in addition to Christianity. This inclusive attitude reflects the emphasis given by the school to the worth and value of every individual. As a result, learners are happy and enjoy their life at school. They enjoy learning because, "You can trust the teachers and they make learning fun." Learners understand and value the links with the Church. Every class uses the school prayer, or learners' own prayers, at the end of the day. Grace is said before lunch by every class. This means that learners are able to explain the meaning and purpose of prayer in the school day. The Christian values of the school are explicit in the behaviour of the learners, in and between lessons. This is because relationships in the school are good, between learners, and amongst staff and learners. The school's emphasis on mutual respect and integrity is highly regarded by parents. Good opportunities for spiritual development are making a positive impact in the lives of learners. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, a learner said that, "It is possible to be confident and sad at the same time." This perceptive observation was a result of sensitive teaching and mutual trust. An emphasis on developing learners' imagination and spiritual awareness is evident in and across the curriculum. This can be seen in religious education, where learners in both Key Stages are encouraged to think about the nature of God. In Key Stage 1, a display of learners' comments included, "Sometimes I can hear God talk." In a Key Stage 2 lesson, learners understand God's miraculous intervention in the lives of the Israelites, and the significance of this for Jews today. The quality and enthusiasm of the coordination and teaching of religious education reflects the status given to the subject. The learners benefit from an enriched curriculum, with good extra curricular activities. The JAFFA Club ('Jesus, a Friend for All') is led by a teacher and supported by the Young People and Families Worker. This is an example of the positive and effective link between the school and the Church. All of the extra curricular activities are valued by learners, and are providing good opportunities for spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. These are enabling learners to make decisions and affect change. For example, the suggestion by the school council to redesign an area of ground into a sensory garden is being followed up by staff. This is an example of good practice. The school environment, both internal and external, provides good opportunities for learners to think, reflect and pray. As a result, learners are confident to talk about spiritual issues.

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

The attitude of learners to collective worship is enthusiastic. Their enjoyment of worship is reflected in their behaviour. Learners feel able to respond in a natural and relaxed atmosphere. This is because of the school's emphasis on self-discipline rather than control. Teachers provide excellent role models for learners. They combine respect for each individual, with warmth. All staff regularly attend worship. This results in creating a family atmosphere. In the act of worship observed, a visitor used visual aids to illustrate the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. The theme of God's love for all, meant that learners were given an opportunity to understand more about the nature of God. The coordination and planning of collective worship is good. As a result, learners are experiencing a variety of styles of worship. Parents regularly attend worship in school and in the parish Church. Their inclusion reflects the importance given by the school to links with parents, the Church and the community. The local Methodist Minister helps to strengthen the links between Church and school. As a result, learners' knowledge and experience of key Christian festivals is good. The monitoring of worship is effective, although it does not currently include all stakeholders. The policy does not refer to the wholly Christian worship of the school. Opportunities for

spiritual awareness in collective worship are good. For example, the hall contains an altar, special cloth, artefacts and a prayer board. This means that learners have a good visual Christian focus for worship. The learners' daily response to the lighting of a candle.... "We light this candle to remind us that we are here to worship God", is an example of best practice.

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

The school has made good progress in the development of the Christian character of the school. This is due to the clear leadership of the Headteacher. The Deputy Headteacher, Foundation governor, Methodist Minister and all staff, support her effectively. The previous Parish Priest established a strong and creative partnership with the school, in collaboration with the Methodist Minister. The use of explicit symbols representing the school's Church of England foundation is evident in every classroom and in public areas. These symbols are in addition to the prayer board in the hall, a 'quiet bench' in the grounds for reflection, and a reflective area in a corridor for prayer. All of these significant features indicate good leadership and Christian distinctiveness. This is emphasised by the good overall leadership and management of religious education and collective worship. Parents praise the role models provided by all staff. One parent of a child with special educational needs referred to the "Safe, comfortable atmosphere" in the school. This is due to the Headteacher's emphasis on providing a calm, and caring environment. Everyone in the school is treated with dignity and respect.

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