

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Matthew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Road,
Cainscross,
Stroud,
Gloucestershire
GL5 4JE

Diocese: Gloucester

Local authority: Gloucestershire

Dates of inspection: 18th September 2007

Date of last inspection: 19th February 2002

School's URN: 115699

Headteacher: Mr P Weekes

Inspector: Mr C Westall, NS 325

School context

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School is a voluntary aided school situated near to the centre of Stroud. There are presently 197 children on roll. The majority of children are from white British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or with disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The headteacher joined the school in September 2006. The school is currently undergoing a major re-building programme.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mathew's Primary School as a Church school is good.

St Matthew's Primary School has a distinctive Christian ethos that permeates all aspects of school life. During his first year the headteacher has worked tirelessly to engage with all members of the school community to ensure a secure environment in which all children are able to develop and flourish.

Established strengths

- The vision and leadership provided by the headteacher.
- The warm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school.
- The good links with the local church
- The opportunities given to children in Key Stage 2 to lead and organise collective worship.

Focus for development

- Revisit the school's aims, so that they fully reflect the school's trust deed and school's mission statement.
- Foundation Governors to use the newly adopted self evaluation procedures, in order to check the school's effectiveness as a Church School.
- Make good use of the newly rebuilt front entrance to communicate the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- Provide opportunities for the school's R.E coordinator to monitor teaching and learning in order to further develop children's progress.

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

St Matthew's Primary School has a secure, happy and cheerful atmosphere and Christian principles are being embedded. Children enjoy coming to school and demonstrate a caring attitude. They are keen to celebrate each other's achievements. Relationships between staff, pupils and parents are good. Children are confident in the fact that staff listen to their concerns and secure in the knowledge that they will be treated fairly. Parents feel welcomed and involved in the life of the school. This is helped by the approachability of both the headteacher and the teaching staff. The school has successfully sought the views of parents over the past year. For example, following feedback from a questionnaire given to parents, the school made clear its expectation with regard children's school uniform. Parents appreciated this unambiguous approach.

The school successfully broadcasts its distinctiveness as a church school through display of children's work. The large scale construction work at the front of the school will also provide a further opportunity to communicate the school's Christian ethos to visitors and the wider community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is valued by the pupils at St Matthews and plays an important part in the daily life of the school. Older pupils appreciate leading and organising the worship that takes place once a week in their classrooms.

An appropriate atmosphere is set at the start of whole school collective worship through the lighting of a candle. Children are immediately engaged by displays set at the front of the school hall related to the worship theme. Children enjoy repeating the Lord's Prayer and sharing 'The Peace' at the close of the assembly.

There are very good links between the school and the local church, despite the fact that the church is awaiting the arrival of a new vicar. The school has recently revised the use of the church for collective worship. Instead of weekly visits, the church is now used only for celebrating special festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and St Mathew's Day. Children from the school also make a positive contribution to the Sunday family service held monthly at St Matthew's church.

The Headteacher is the school's collective worship coordinator. Weekly themes are often based upon the agreed Christian values that the school community is keen to promote. Evaluation of collective worship is as yet underdeveloped. The process is not rigorous enough and does not sufficiently tackle the issue of its impact on the school community.

The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory

All members of St Mathews Primary School recognise the importance of Religious Education in upholding the school's distinctive character and the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. The quality of teaching and learning observed was satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers effectively use a wide range of teaching strategies such as artefacts and games to promote children's understanding. Children's learning is successfully encouraged through development of their questioning skills. For example, at the start of a project looking at the Hindu religion, children in Year 6 had written their own questions to help them to think about what they would like to discover for themselves. These questions were displayed to enable easy reference. The school follows the Gloucestershire Locally Agreed Syllabus. The RE coordinator has good subject knowledge. The school however has not developed effective approaches to evaluate teaching and learning in religious education. The R.E coordinator has not been given the chance to formally observe teaching and so she has been unable to gain a true picture of how the subject is taught and can be further developed.

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

Since his arrival the headteacher has effectively sought the views of representatives from the school's community in order to reiterate the school's distinctiveness as a Church School. He has a clear Christian vision for the school which is understood by parents and

supported by all members of the school staff and the governing body. The headteacher has worked effectively with the diocese to implement an extensive rebuilding programme. He has also developed a very dynamic relationship with the local church and is actively involved in the parochial church council.

The school's aims do not make sufficient reference to the school's trust deed or its mission statement. The aims do not place enough emphasis upon the development of the whole child and in particular children's spiritual development.

Currently there are insufficient systems in place for Governors and senior staff to check the effectiveness of Worship, Religious Education and the school's Christian distinctiveness. Consequently there has been a limited approach to planning professional development for staff in leading collective worship and teaching aspects of Religious Education.

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School Church Road, Cainscross, Stroud,
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