

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

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

Linden Close  
Winterbourne  
Bristol  
BS36 1LG

#### **Diocese: Bristol**

Local authority: South Gloucestershire  
Date of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008  
Date of last inspection: December 2003  
School's unique reference number: 109225  
Headteacher: Adrian Vye  
Inspector's name and number: Daphne Spitzer - 37

#### **School context**

St Michael's Church of England Primary School serves the village of Winterbourne, close to the city of Bristol. There are 170 children on roll. The school accommodation is well maintained, bright and modern. The grounds are attractively laid out with adventure trails and a spacious playing field. St Michael's church is at a considerable distance from the school. The new headteacher was appointed three years ago and a new full time priest in charge has now been appointed, after a long vacancy.

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

The leadership of the new headteacher and long serving deputy headteacher is very good. Christian values permeate throughout the daily life of the school. There is a strong warm family atmosphere.

#### **Established strengths**

- Very caring headteacher and staff who are united in their determination to put each individual child at the heart of all they do.
- Effective partnership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Warm Christian ethos much valued by the whole school community.
- Very supportive governing body who are committed to developing the school's Christian foundation.

#### **Focus for development**

- Include the development of the school's distinctive Christian character in the strategic long term strategic planning.
- Improve further the quality of collective worship and ensure the regular participation of the whole school community.
- Working with the newly appointed incumbent continue to develop and strengthen the links with the local church community.

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

The school makes very good provision to effectively meet the needs of all its learners through its warm implicit Christian ethos. Children feel highly valued and special. The school proclaims its Christian Foundation through its new logo, worn with pride by the children. It symbolises the story of St Michael and the angel and their school. It was designed by a parent from drawings made by children. Parents feel secure that their children are very well cared for and value the way the headteacher and all staff are immediately accessible.

Children are happy in school and as one child said they all get on together “like a big family.” The school’s promotion of its core Christian values of inclusion, equality and care are very effective. There is a wide range of extra curricular activities including a gardening club run by the caretaker. The school is particularly sensitive of the needs of all children considering them as individuals. A link with “Paul’s Place,” an organisation for disabled people is agreed by the children to be of mutual benefit to both parties. The school strongly supports the children’s’ spiritual development as part of its daily life. For instance, a thought provoking display by younger children entitled “Who is God?” provides a source for discussion. Year 6 enjoy a residential visit to Lee Abbey, an outdoor adventure camp organised by a Christian group. Times of prayer are integral to the school day. Grace is said before lunch. On the day of the inspection, pieces of writing about the good news told by St Francis, were shared and used most effectively as a source for reflection at the start of collective worship. The distinctiveness of this church school is demonstrated very well by the way it conducts its’ church services. These are huge community events involving the community policeman and witnessed by local shoppers. Michaelmas is celebrated by a parade from the school to the church, carrying two manikins of St Michael and the devil. The recent Easter service began with a procession of children representing Jesus and his friends with two donkeys. The school proclaims its Christian Foundation very clearly through its bright, attractive, display of its school prayer in the school hall. Together with its logo, this colourful feature reinforces the school’s unique Christian identity and serves to unite the whole school community.

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

Collective worship is an important part of daily school life. It is well coordinated by the deputy headteacher who ensures it underpins the Christian character of the school. All staff lead various acts of worship, although at present, not all attend each day. The programme is well planned using a variety of resources, including the diocesan resource “Values for Life” and follow the church’s calendar year. It is monitored regularly by the headteacher through informal discussions with children and practice is altered in line with their feedback. Learners’ attitudes to worship are very positive. They clearly enjoyed singing hymns in the act observed, as well as the humour used to good effect in the role play. Children participated fully as noted when they were asked to discuss a given topic in pairs. The theme of “changes” was considered by them to be highly relevant and meaningful for all ages present. The Christian message of trusting in God was clearly understood by all. Collective worship is very effective in developing the learners’ spiritual awareness. It includes a time for reflection and prayer, often written specially by the children to link with the theme. The school ensures that worship is inclusive and is sensitive to the needs of the diverse religious communities it serves. The Church Assembly Team also visit to lead worship each term, are known to the children and are much valued visitors. The children’s understanding of the Anglican faith is good. A beautiful icon of St Michael, given by the previous vicar two years ago, together with a cross provides focal points on the table used for worship. A candle is lit on some days to signify Jesus light and the Lord’s prayer is said. In spite of the distance, the school makes regular visits the St Michael’s church for the main Christian festivals as well as for their Michaelmas celebrations and leavers’ service. These services are well attended by parents.

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

The headteacher, together with the deputy head and governors have a clear vision for the development of this church school. Following his commissioning service, he involved the whole school community in reviewing the school’s vision, motto and developing its unique new Christian logo. The governors are actively involved in monitoring the school’s vision. The Lay Reader who is the chair of governors described their vision as “underpinning implicitly and explicitly all they do”. Governors of the month attend acts of collective worship, visit classes, observe RE and report back to the governors ensuring a Christian dialogue is present at all meetings. Staff feel highly valued and supported by the clergy and foundation governors. In times of need, such as when there have been bereavements in the school community, pastoral support has been generously given. Self evaluation of the school as a church school is satisfactory. It is, as yet, in its early stages of development. However, the leadership have identified the need to fill the gap left by the vacancy of the parish priest and have worked very effectively towards this objective. Diocesan links are strong. For instance, the Year 6 children attend the cathedral “Moving On” day and carol concert. RE is well led

and managed by the deputy headteacher. She has developed a scheme of work which reflects the school's Christian foundation and also gives prominence to the other faiths represented in the school community. The part time teacher teaches RE to half the school affirming the importance on this core subject. Assessment is regularly carried out ensuring learning meets the needs of all learners. The partnership between the school and church and local community is strong. This is reflected by the success of the school's current initiative for children to write regular articles for the Parish Magazine. Members of the congregation are regularly invited for join school for lunch and for breakfast. The long awaited and most welcome priest is now in post. The leadership are looking forward to working with him as he takes a special role in the development of this good church school.

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