

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St. Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School,

55 Woolbrook Road
Sidmouth
EX10 9XB

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 19th September 2007

Date of last inspection: October 2003

School's unique reference number: 113437

Headteacher: Mr Paul Walker

Inspector's name and number: Mr Roger Guest No 206

School context

St Nicholas's School is a large Junior School with 345 pupils; the majority of whom are from a white British background. The school has a high proportion of pupils with some level of learning difficulty. The relatively new school buildings have added considerably to the school's space available.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas's as a Church of England school are good

St. Nicholas is a good school with a distinctive Christian ethos. Aspects of its work in Religious education are outstanding as is its distinctive Christian character. Christian attitudes are apparent all its relationships. This engenders positive attitudes towards teaching and learning. Its mission statement is lived out by all the members of the school and this successfully creates a Christian learning community.

Established strengths

- Pupils develop an outstanding depth of spiritual awareness.
- The school's Christian ethos is outstanding.
- Very strong religious education teaching is supported by excellent links with other curriculum subjects.

Focus for development

- Undertake a thorough review of the Christian vision of the school and systematically challenge and evaluate its implementation.
- Use the strong links developed with local Churches to promote a wider understanding of and involvement with the school as a worshipping community.
- Actively seek and consider parents' views in the management of the school.

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

St Nicholas' school is an outstanding example of the positive impact of the Christian faith on the lives of all in the school. Acceptance of everyone regardless of, culture faith or creed lies at the centre of the school's ethos. Pupils are encouraged to think beyond themselves and their environment. Consequently, the development of the pupils' spirituality is outstanding. Pupils experiences are expanded beyond the classroom curriculum by the effective use of a variety of visits and visitors. Pupils feel valued and cared for by the school. This stimulates the respect, which underpins all school relationships and ensures pupils feel secure and

confident. Pupils support each other well and the school mentoring system is highly regarded by parents and pupils alike. Pupils are treated positively within lessons with good behaviour being praised and used as an example. This successfully promotes pupils' social and moral learning. The visit by Watoto Children's Choir extended the pupils' understanding of different cultures and deepened pupils' feeling for the plight of many African children. In an inclusive environment, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Conflicts are rare but when they arise are dealt with compassionately and positively. Forgiveness is one of the five key values chosen by the school community as a key aspect of their life and work together. Pupils' understanding and application of this adds to a distinctively Christian atmosphere exceptionally well. Pupils make good use of opportunities for prayer and reflection. In particular, the prayer corner near the Head's office is well and appropriately used by pupils. The new, spacious addition to the old school building is used in a similar manner to demonstrate, through bright, prominent and interesting displays, the distinctive Christian character of the school. Any visitor to the school is faced with an ever changing, well-constructed display of the work of a Christian community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship is of consistently good quality and central to school life. Worship unites the school community and is truly inclusive. Pupils and staff speak of it as a valuable experience. This is because worship is well planned. An appropriate atmosphere is set by the careful choice of music which is playing as the pupils enter the school hall. Pupils respond to this by coming into worship quietly and reverently. Staff provide good role models and this encourages the good behaviour exhibited by the children. The pupils are engaged by themes which are appropriate to their age and understanding. Classroom activities support and extend concepts introduced in worship, enabling children to relate worship to their lives. Consequently there is outstanding spiritual development through worship which includes ample opportunities for prayer and reflection. Pupils' understanding of the Anglican tradition is good. This has been brought about by a combination of things including the use of the Church's year as a framework for worship, close links with the local parish, the use of liturgical colours in worship (depicting the seasons of the Church's year), the celebration of Eucharist and the use of simple responses and traditional Christian prayers. Unfortunately, due to difficulties of space parents and the wider community are only able to join in school worship occasionally.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils speak of their enjoyment of Religious Education (RE) lessons. This is because work is challenging and exciting. Consequently their work is outstanding and their behaviour in lessons is very good. This is supported by outstanding planning, teaching and assessment which further stimulates high standards of work. The way in which other curriculum areas support RE teaching is outstanding for example, the manner in which Bible passages were used to stimulate dance in a P.E lesson and the positive pupil response to it demonstrates the importance of R.E in the life of the school. Pupils have an outstanding basic knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism. They listen to each other with interest and respect and share ideas especially well. Questions asked by pupils reveal a deepening understanding of the basis of faith. The subject is managed very effectively by the co-ordinator who monitors teaching and learning. The school is recognised locally for its strength in Religious Education and has shared its work with local schools and Churches. The curriculum time allocation is appropriate.

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

The governing body has actively and successfully sought to appoint personnel to promote the school's strong Christian ethos. Both the Headteacher and deputy Headteacher are very new to their posts. The school has an outstanding distinctive character as a result largely of the work of the previous Head, Deputy and Coordinator. This remains the case. However the current replacements in those posts have not had time to make their own impact. The Governing body has been well directed by the previous head and all are re-establishing their roles at present. The Headteacher articulates a clear vision for the development of the school

as a Christian learning community, building upon the very strong Christian ethos he has inherited. The school's Christian Foundation is evident in all documentation, and parents and governors speak confidently and supportively about the Christian environment in which pupils learn. Procedures to enable the governing body to challenge the school in its development, through direct observation are now less in evidence. This is because the practice of having regular visits with particular aspects of the schools work in mind has become less frequent. The staff, headteacher and governing body have evaluated and contributed meaningfully to school improvement. The school's own self-evaluation is good and good monitoring and evaluation processes inform the School Improvement Plan accurately. The Headteacher, staff and governors are supportive of each other in providing for the benefit of the pupils. School staff are receiving good support from the school's leaders. They now feel more confident in sharing and developing the school's ongoing vision. This is especially important at this time of transition and the development of new management structures. Some Parents feel their views have not been fully sought in the past and speak with less conviction as to how the school has valued their views. The school has developed productive and supportive links with the local Church community.

SIAS report September 2007 St Nicholas VA Junior Sidmouth EX10 9XB