

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Paul Street,
Shepton Mallet
BA4 5LA

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: Friday 7th November 2008

Date of last inspection: 4th – 6th July 2005

School's unique reference number: 123783

Headteacher: Mrs Chris Arnold

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Ruth Newton - 613

School context

St Paul's Church of England Junior School is an urban junior school with 295 pupils in 11 classes. The children transfer from two infant schools in the town, and many come from challenging socio-economic backgrounds. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities and those with English as an additional language is rising, although it is below national average at present. The head teacher has been in post since 2004.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's Church of England Junior School as a Church school is outstanding.

The head teacher, Rector and the new Religious Education co-ordinator work collaboratively with staff and governors to create a uniquely special culture which is inclusive, effective and distinctive as a church school. One pupil's prayer sums it up by saying 'I hope our school never shuts'.

Established strengths

- The vision and very effective leadership of the head teacher
- Excellent links with the parish, particularly the Rector
- Foundation governors who support the school on a day to day basis in many ways, including working in the newly opened Support Centre
- Very inclusive school ethos, where the strengths of all children are recognised and celebrated

Focus for development

- Ensure Foundation Governors annually review Worship and the Christian Foundation of the school
- Continue to develop the improved behaviour policy by exploring and including 'forgiveness'
- Further develop the role of School Council in order that they may be more involved in the Christian Foundation by sharing their ideas for planning worship and Christian giving to others

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding in the way it meets the needs of all learners

St Paul's is a very inclusive school with high numbers of children with Special Educational Needs. This is managed successfully by providing for the differing needs of individual pupils through focussed support and intervention. The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding, including the provision of Parent and Family Support Workers and the Support Centre, which

one of the Foundation Governors works in. Parents, staff and governors speak of a tangible feeling of care and love that pervades the school. Work to improve behaviour has closely involved pupils through the introduction of SEAL, Peaceful Problem Solving and ABC co-ordinators. Further developments in improving behaviour are continuing, including the Restorative Justice program, and it will be important to include the element of Christian forgiveness in this. Both Collective Worship and RE are major contributors to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. One class had included in a display of how they would like the world to be 'respectful of other people's differences'. All achievement is celebrated and this helps to strengthen further the very good relationships between all areas of the school community. Very good relationships with parents have been strengthened by providing more opportunities for them to be consulted and involved and this has been appreciated. Parents speak highly of staff and of their rapid response to any concerns, including at times phone calls out of school hours. It is evident that the whole school works within strong Christian values for living and learning together where everyone (as one pupil explained) 'knows we can turn to God if we need to'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The daily act of Collective Worship is very important to the life of the school. Staff, pupils, governors and parents speak of the value of this to them personally. Parents welcome the Christian value base that the pupils are taught and also the opportunity for them to join with their children for services. Pupils enjoy the variety of worship with different leaders and styles including action songs and role play. The Lord's Prayer or the School Prayer (written by the children), are used at worship along with Anglican responses and a quiet time for reflection, as appropriate. Special services for Harvest, Christmas, Easter and for Leavers, plus a monthly service are held in the church. The contribution of the Rector and other church leaders to worship and its impact on the school community is outstanding. Evaluations of worship are carried out and evaluated by the Head teacher and shared with governors. In order to develop this further the Rector and Foundation Governors should consider these evaluations annually as they review the Christian Foundation of the School. 99% of pupils said they enjoyed worship in a recent questionnaire. Pupils help during services and a group of Y6 are working with the RE Co-ordinator to plan their own service. This will eventually develop to include all year groups in the planning and delivery of school worship. The introduction of the 'Worship Well' has helped to provide further opportunities for prayer and to deepen pupils understanding of what prayer is. One Y6 boy explained that the prayers were read by God. Another child talked about how useful it was to 'take time to talk to God now and again and also to listen to what He may have to say to you'.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

The Headteacher, school management team, new RE co-ordinator, Rector and other governors have ensured that this is a very effective Church of England School. Much time has been spent working with staff to improve provision for the pupils, working with parents to build strong, trusting relationships, and working with pupils to enable them to believe in themselves and to succeed. Strong links have been built with the church and the local community. Pupils sing in care homes at Christmas and also raise money for the churches link with Zambia. Through this they have been taught to care for others. When discussing what they would spend the prize money on, from the Pigeon Race, pupils from School Council were unanimous in saying that it should be divided between Zambia, elderly people in the community and their very special school.

The School Council role should now be further developed in order that they may be more involved in the leadership of the school and in the Christian Foundation by sharing their excellent ideas for planning worship and Christian giving to others less fortunate than themselves. The new enthusiastic RE Co-ordinator has already done much to raise standards in RE across the school. Pupils talk about exciting lessons where they learn about Christianity and other religions using ICT and artefacts. They particularly enjoyed the World Religions Days. The Governing body work well as 'critical friend' and are very aware of the strengths and areas of development in this church school. They participate in the day to day life of the school and include it and all the school community in their prayers. The school has very good

relations with the Diocese of Bath and Wells and have accessed training courses and resources. The impact of the leadership and management of this school as a church school can best be summed up in the words of a child's prayer 'Thank you for making our school a place where we feel safe'.

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Paul Street, Shepton Mallet BA4 5LA November 2008