

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

School Close
Greenlands Estate
Tavistock, Devon
PL19 9HW

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon
Dates of inspection: Monday January 14th 2008
Date of last inspection: 3rd – 5th February 2003
School's unique reference number: 113482
Headteacher: Mr. John George
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jenny Pestridge (153)

School context

The school is situated on a large, pleasant site in the rural outskirts of Tavistock. There are 138 learners from across the town and surrounding area. The school has close links with St Ruman's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infants School in Tavistock. A new Deputy Headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2007.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School, as a Church of England school are good.

The school has a secure understanding of its Church of England foundation, and Christian principles are evident throughout the life of the school. As a result of its Christian ethos, the school combines care and challenge. Learners are therefore enabled to achieve good standards.

Established strengths

- The leadership and management of the Headteacher in creating a calm, caring Christian environment for learners.
- The role model provided by staff and governors for learners.
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the religious education coordinator and the senior management, to continue to develop standards in the subject.

Focus for development

- Monitor and evaluate opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum
- Formally monitor and evaluate collective worship, and involve all stakeholders.
- Develop the use of creative teaching strategies in religious education, as part of the schools review of Attainment Target 2. Include a review of the purpose and role of written work in religious education in this process.

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

The confidence of the learners reflects the care shown by the staff in the school. The focus on the well-being of learners at every level is appreciated by parents. They describe the staff as "kind, caring and supportive." Learners participate in decision making through an established school council. They also enjoy the peer mediation programme, as a way of sharing in the care shown to others. Both these initiatives are enabling learners to develop good life skills. This means that in their lessons, learners are able to work together and independently. Relationships reflect the school's emphasis on mutual care and respect. The staff are excellent role models for learners. As a result, learners are happy and enjoy coming to school.

The Christian ethos provides an implicit context for the current aims of the school. These aims have been identified for review, in order to create an explicit Christian mission statement. The school has not yet identified specific values, involving all stakeholders. The impact of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for learners is good. Because of this, learners are able to ask ultimate questions, and feel confident to discuss spiritual issues. The use of displays stimulates and promotes learning. For example, the use of a display on images of Jesus in Year 6 challenges learners to question the traditional portrayal of Jesus. There is good provision of a quiet area and an environmental area in the school grounds. These are appreciated by learners, and are used by the school to develop their imagination, for example, through art. Prayer is a regular part of the school day. This emphasis on prayer is also shown by the weekly staff prayer meeting in the school. This is an example of best practice.

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

Learners are enthusiastic about collective worship. As a result, they are able to recall many of the themes over a long period of time. They enjoy the range of visitors, because of the high quality of their presentations. Learners especially comment on the talks given by groups from the town, and local area, such as JAM (Jesus and Me) and JUMP (Jesus Understands Me Personally). Learners enjoy the fortnightly visits by the Vicar, and refer to the humour in his talks, which is enjoyed by all the school community. All of these visitors are making a significant contribution to the impact of collective worship in the lives of learners. In the act of worship observed, the Headteacher held the attention of learners through the effective telling of a story. The theme of how God answers prayer in unusual ways was relevant for everyone present, including staff. The inclusion of Christian banners in the hall and the use of a 'prayer tree', provide a visual Christian focus for learners. The school has identified the need to review the current 4-year rolling programme, as part of its self-evaluation process. At present, there is no formal evaluation of collective worship. This means that the impact of worship in the lives of learners is not being used to inform future planning or developments. Learners are not currently involved in the planning process. The links with the Church through twice termly services are good. The sharing with other schools in the termly service of Eucharist is outstanding practice. As a result, learners are experiencing key Christian festivals and beliefs, in the context of both the Church and the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

The school has identified that standards in religious education are lower than in the other core subjects. The school's analysis has identified the need to emphasise Attainment Target 2 (learning from religion). Currently, learners do not experience a significant range of creative and expressive opportunities in their lessons. Subsequently, their enjoyment of the subject is affected. Where teachers are providing stimulating and creative material, learners are positive and enthusiastic. They particularly comment on their enjoyment of drama, role play and design and technology. These strategies are currently under-used in religious education. However, teachers are using discussion techniques effectively. Learners are able to discuss issues in both small and large groups. They respect the views of others, and work cooperatively. In lessons observed in Years 5 and 6, learners were given the opportunity to discuss the importance and relevance of rules for today's world, in the context of the ten commandments. As a result of effective and challenging teaching in both classes, learners were able to discuss the difference between murder and killing in self-defence. They were beginning to think about killing in war situations, and whether countries could legislate for peace. Learners worked enthusiastically because of good planning and preparation. The recording of written work in exercise books has not received a strategic review. The emphasis on Attainment Target 1 (learning about religion) is not providing learners with the opportunity to reflect and respond on their learning. However there has been a significant improvement in the time allocation given to religious education. The enthusiasm of the coordinator to continue to improve standards is reflected in initiatives in assessment.

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

The Headteacher is committed to creating a learning community which emphasises the care and respect of others. This reflects the implicit Christian beliefs and values, which underpin the policies and practices of the school. As a result, the school has a high reputation amongst the parents. They refer to their confidence in all the staff, and to the way in which any issues are dealt with immediately. The school has an open, inclusive policy, which is borne out by comments from the parents. The partnership between the school and the Church is well established. It is being maintained and developed by the new Priest in charge. His regular support in the collective worship programme makes a major contribution to the learners' spiritual development. These effective Church links are also due to the enthusiasm of the foundation governors, and endorsed by the whole governing body. Governors are committed to the Church of England foundation of the school and are actively involved in school life. Explicit visual references to the positive links with the Church, and to the school's Church of England foundation are under-developed in the foyer and main corridor. Links with the community are good. For example, the school has close and developing links with a local Church of England Infants school. Improving transitional arrangements and general communications represent good developments in this relationship.

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