

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Doniford Road,
Williton,
Taunton
TA4 4SF

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset County

Dates of inspection: 30 September 2008

Date of last inspection: 22, 23 June 2004

School's unique reference number: 123781

Headteacher: Mr James Peate

Inspector's name and number: Mr David Williams - 599

School context

St Peter's Church of England First School has 104 pupils on roll aged from 4 to 9. The school serves the village of Williton and the surrounding area. Almost all the pupils are white British. The proportion of pupils who have special needs is 29.7% and 33% are known to be eligible for free school meals. St Peter's is part of a three-school federation with each school sharing the same governing body.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors work together to promote a distinctive Christian ethos that permeates every aspect of school life. Staff, pupils, parents and governors are all valued as partners 'on the learning journey.' This ethos has been nurtured by the headteacher who leads a school, which is characterised by the care shown to each individual enabling them to develop spiritually in a safe and secure Christian environment.

Established strengths

- The inclusive Christian ethos that highly values and demonstrates very good care for all members of the school community.
- The headteacher's leadership of the school as a church school.
- The impact of collective worship on the spiritual and moral development of all pupils.

Focus for development

- Improvement of the outside areas to promote pupil's spiritual development
- Further develop the role of the RE and Collective worship coordinators by enabling them to monitor RE teaching and class collective worship
- To further develop the role of the Ethos Group in developing the school's Christian ethos.

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

The distinctive Christian character of the school is good with some outstanding features. The importance placed on the distinctive Christian character of St Peter's as a church school is explicit in the school's mission statement, its policies and on the St Peter's website where the 'welcome' page declares, 'We are very proud of our Christian ethos.' In conversation, an older child confidently described the significance of the Christian symbols from the badge on his school sweatshirt stating, 'We're a Christian school.' The Christian values of love of God and each other are evident in the respectful and caring relationships that exist within the school. Teachers know the needs of their pupils and demonstrate a desire to celebrate the uniqueness of each individual. The weekly celebration worship is enjoyed by parents and children and this is effective in recognising achievement throughout the school. The result of this is that pupils say they feel valued and safe knowing that staff will always listen and help.

The 'open door' policy gives opportunities for parents to speak informally with teachers. As a result, relationships between staff, pupils and parents are very good. The school is good at providing for the needs of all its pupils by offering a range of clubs suited for a variety of pupil's interests. As a result parents say that their children enjoy coming to school and children speak fondly of the 'St Peter's smile'. The DASH (Do Activity Stay Healthy) pre-school club is another good example of the school's desire to serve its community by giving pupils the opportunity to start each day with physical exercise followed by a healthy breakfast. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good as is their ability to manage their own emotions. In one classroom pupils were using circle time to explore the emotion of sadness and to share practical ways of helping themselves and others. An interactive display in one of the corridors encouraged pupils to say a prayer for someone as they take a bead and hook it onto the 'prayer net.' The school could improve the opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of all stakeholders by the further development of its grounds and especially the establishing of the memorial garden that is currently under construction. RE is carefully planned by the RE coordinator, according to the Agreed Syllabus and the vicar is often involved in evaluating the quality of RE teaching. Pupils are encouraged to make some connections between what they learn and its influence on their everyday lives, which makes a further contribution to the distinctive Christian character of the school. The school should explore further ways of evaluating the impact of the RE teaching. The school uses Christian symbols such as a cross, to remind pupils that the school has its foundation in Christian roots. Classrooms display class prayers and displays around the school and an altar table in the hall are further used to reinforce this.

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

Collective worship is very good with some aspect being outstanding. Collective worship lies at the heart of the life of the school. It is well planned for and contributes significantly to the spiritual and moral development of pupils. They enter the hall purposefully, their behaviour throughout is very good and they are very keen to contribute by answering questions and volunteering to take part. Collective worship is distinctively Christian and often has elements of the Anglican tradition such as a greeting at the start of worship and the inclusion of prayer and Christian songs. Pupils in Year 4 attend a monthly Parish communion service during which they are given a blessing. A Year 4 child said, 'I really like that service, it's exciting.' An improvement since the last inspection is seen by the distinction now made between 'collective worship' and 'assembly'.

Pupils are encouraged to engage in collective worship by practically helping and taking part, they sing enthusiastically and are encouraged to reflect through a moment of stillness or prayer. They understand the significance of symbols such as the lighting of a candle which one child stated, 'It reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world.' Pupil's have positive attitudes towards collective worship and are able to say what they enjoy about it and how it helps them in every day situations. Following collective worship that focussed on giving thanks, there was a noticeable increase in the phrase 'thank you' being used between pupils throughout the school. Parents welcome the opportunity to attend acts of collective worship both in school and in church. The latter are often linked to the celebration of major festivals and enables the whole school community to worship together. At these times, pupils are active participants in the worship and are able to express themselves through drama, music and prayer. The development of pupil initiated activities on a more regular basis would enhance existing practice. The school benefits from very strong links with the local Parish Church and local clergy from different Christian denominations. Pupils and their parents say that they especially enjoy worship led by the vicar both in school and when they go to church. The church and school showed outstanding combined support following the tragic death of a pupil at the school. A special service was sensitively planned and made a significant impact in supporting pupils, parents and staff in the process of bereavement.

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

The headteacher's leadership and clear vision for the school is very good. His style of leadership is warm and welcoming and helps to bring about a sense of community. He refers to the relationship between school and church as being 'a family, always there for each other.' All these features contribute to provide pupils with a firm foundation for their personal development and education, and parents a safe and secure environment for their children. Parents acknowledge the impact of his leadership in making recent improvements.

Governors are supportive of the work of the headteacher and staff and seek to actively strengthen the school as a church school. Under the new federated governing body (May 2007) a 'Church Ethos' group has been formed specifically to explore and develop the school's Christian ethos. The governing body, who act as one governing body for three separate church schools, are keen to develop this 'family of church schools'. Actions have led to improvements especially in respect of utilising staff expertise across the three schools to raise standards in pupil attainment. The school enjoys good links with the diocese and should now consider how to further utilise the support available to make further improvement. RE is well organised, planned and resourced by the coordinator. The school has developed its own RE resource boxes, used to support teaching and learning. Improvement could be made by developing resources for multi-cultural elements of RE teaching and the use of ICT. The inclusion of RE in the School Development Plan would be a further improvement. The collective worship coordinator is enthusiastic and provides very good leadership in planning and monitoring collective worship. Both staff and pupils are encouraged to evaluate worship through writing comments on a record sheet. As a result of this self-evaluation, staff have been able to make changes to themes. Opportunities for the collective worship and RE coordinators to observe class teachers could lead to further improvement.

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Doniford Road, Williton,
Taunton TA4 4SF September 2008