

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Witheridge Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Witheridge
Tiverton
EX16 8AH

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon
Dates of inspection: 25th February 2008
Date of last inspection: 8th/9th April 2003
School's unique reference number: 113384
Headteacher: Mr Steve Duncan
Inspector's name and number: Roger Guest 206

School context

Witheridge is a small village primary school with 90 pupils on roll. There are above average number of pupils with special educational needs. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. The school shares a site with an independent pre-school. The School has access to large grounds and interesting play areas.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Witheridge as a Church of England school are good

Witheridge primary school is a good Church of England primary school providing a caring environment for the development of its pupils. The headteacher and foundation governors are successfully promoting the distinctive Christian character of the school. The headteacher, aided by the teaching staff and foundation governors, leads all aspects of the school's Christian development.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the headteacher, supported by foundation governors, to continue developing the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The safety and care of children in a happy and secure environment
- The school's Christian character which is reflected in relationships between staff and between staff and learners

Focus for development

- Create a strategy, which includes views of all stakeholders, whereby the governing body may regularly evaluate the Christian character of the school.
- Introduce a formal monitoring and evaluation process for collective worship.
- Develop links with local Church to promote children's knowledge of Anglican faith and practice.

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

As a result of the high priority staff place on the inclusion of all pupils and the development of their self-esteem[0], pupils have a pride in their school and feel safe and secure in it. The school's buddy system is effective in ensuring that conflicts are rare. Pupils develop a good sense of right and wrong because Christian values are promoted through a balanced programme of collective worship. These values are further developed through the good role models of the staff. Recent training has renewed the commitment of the Headteacher and foundation governors in re-invigorating the school's vision as a distinctively Christian place of

learning. As a result, pupils are learning how to show concern for others and understand the value of forgiveness. The school is well placed to develop this distinctiveness even further. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual and moral development because displays of work, and the emphasis placed on spirituality across the curriculum, are beginning to challenge and stimulate their thinking and actions. The school's prospectus for parents makes no reference to worship nor to the centrality of the school's Christian vision. However, the folders designed in 2006 provide a striking example of the centrality of the Church in the life of the school and are very effectively revealing the school's re-established belief in its Christian vision.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is of good quality and central to the life of the school. Through worship pupils develop their understanding of the Christian values of forgiveness and concern for others. High expectations are set for pupil engagement in worship. Pupils respond well to this, for example, by their singing which enhances the atmosphere of praise. Pupils look forward to worship because a good variety of worship styles are used by the staff, vicar and other visitors. The good role models provided by the staff result in pupils valuing worship and reflecting upon its meaning. Consequently pupils talk about the impact worship has on their behaviour and how it contributes to the decisions they make. Prayer is being extensively used in school. Pupils make up their own prayers, which remember the needs of others. Children use these prayers in class worship and on the school prayer board. This supports the development of pupils' spirituality well. The school does not at present offer a Eucharist. Other productive links with the local Church are not used to further develop pupils' understanding of the Anglican faith. As a result pupils' awareness of distinctive aspects of the Anglican tradition is weak. Foundation governors have monitored worship informally and reported to the governing body. However, responsibility for worship needs to be embraced and supported by the full governing body which needs to collect robust evidence to enable it to become more effective in its role in challenging the development of worship.

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

The headteacher and foundation governors make a core group committed to developing the Christian character of the school. Their leadership is resulting in the Christian distinctiveness of the school progressing. They have thoughtfully used The National Society toolkit as a focus for school evaluation and developed a good action plan. Teaching staff are supportive of this and eager for additional professional development to further their ability to lead aspects of the school, for example the development of religious education (R.E.). Improvements in R.E. teaching through an implementation of the new locally agreed syllabus is raising standards. The head is currently leading this development. There are good supportive links with the local church and community. Display of pupils' work in the school reflects appropriately its Christian character. The questionnaire used in the past to seek views of parents and pupils makes no reference to the Christian work of the school. This missed opportunity means that the governing body is not fulfilling its role in evaluating the school's Christian distinctiveness. This is because it has no formal or systematic procedures to find out how the school functions in relation to its Christian foundation. This results in a lack of a cohesive drive and challenge towards the school's vision as a Christian learning community.