



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St George's Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant and Nursery School

Jackets Lane
Northam
Devon
EX39 1HT

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 4th May 2010

Date of last inspection: 12th March 2007

School's unique reference number: 113456

Headteacher: Babs Johnson

Inspector's name and number: Wendy Simmons 127

School context

St George's School has 196 pupils including the Nursery. The majority of pupils come from the area around the school with a minority from a wider area. There are strong links with the neighbouring Junior school and positive relationships with local and church community. Most pupils come from white British backgrounds. There are an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St George's School as a Church of England school are good.

The Christian ethos is firmly established and is well led by the headteacher and supported by staff and governors. Young learners' understanding is based upon how they relate what they learn about Jesus, through worship and RE, to their own lives. This creates an environment in which children are happy at school and speak with enthusiasm about their activities.

Established strengths

- The quality of the leadership and management of the headteacher and governors.
- The very good care, guidance and support for all learners.
- The impact of the variety of methods for evaluating collective worship.

Focus for development

- Identify strategies to support continuing development and understanding of Christian values for all stakeholders and embed fully in the life of the school.
- Develop strategies to support learners' understanding of national diversity.
- Create a stronger evidence base to identify progress and standards in RE.

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

The Christian ethos is celebrated and made clear, from the welcoming reception area to displays in classrooms and corridors which reflect the inclusive nature of the school. Christian values of truth, trust, friendship, forgiveness and perseverance are embedded in school life and are displayed around the school. For example, children understand how to offer friendship to others and can identify the friendship spot in the school grounds 'by the trees'. Good use is made of the environment as a tool for learning and spiritual development. For example, children speak enthusiastically of their visit to Rosemoor Gardens and particularly the apple blossom. The impact of the proximity of the beach and surrounding countryside makes a good contribution to children's spiritual development. The school is keen to improve the grounds. This is reflected by identifying a teacher to be trained in Forest Schools to

provide more opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Good progress has been made towards community cohesion through local and international links. For example the community choir includes children from both schools and adults. They sing for senior citizens and at other local events. The school has established links with European schools through the Comenius project. However the school needs to establish national links to help learners understand the diversity of the United Kingdom. The voice of children is valued and the school council is involved in setting class rules developing their understanding of right and wrong. The impact of the earthquake in Haiti and the fund raising helped them understand how to respond to events as they occur. Pupils also contribute to the annual Christmas box appeal. Parents speak very highly of the school. A minority have chosen the school specifically for the Christian ethos while others are happy for their children to learn about faith. For other parents it is their local school. The school recognises and has identified, as an area for development, the opportunity to explore Christian values through a number of ways including a parents' forum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is an important part of the school day and a special time when the whole school comes together in fellowship to pray. The central place of worship is reflected in the inclusion of the very youngest children on two days and their own distinct acts of worship at other times. The nurturing of children's understanding of worship helps them realise that it is an integral, but distinct, part of the life of the school. Pupils are respectful of worship and say it is a time when they listen and talk to God. Prayer is a key aspect of acts of worship. For example, the regular use of the 'Lord's Prayer' makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral and social development of the school community. The use of simple responses helps to create a worshipful atmosphere as worship begins. Children respond with appropriate reverence and respect and are beginning to develop an understanding of Anglican tradition. Worship is clearly planned around themes that give strong messages which support Christian values. For example, values such as truth, trust, forgiveness and perseverance, planned on a two year cycle, give children opportunities to learn about how Jesus taught us to lead our lives. The fact that the school returns to these values means that children are able to explore them at a greater depth as they go through the school. Children enjoy a wide variety of worship styles. The regular visits of the Open the Book team, as well as the celebration of major Christian festivals, ensures that children have opportunities to engage in worship that suits them. Harvest and Christingle services are celebrated in St Margaret's Church strengthening their strong Christian links. This is confirmed in the well developed programme of worship evaluation, using a number of formats by various stakeholders. The views of children and adults are gathered to monitor the way worship is delivered. The impact of the information is used to inform planning. The very good short worship observed, led by the headteacher, told the story of the lost sheep. The headteacher used a toy lamb to demonstrate the notion of 'care' and engaged all children. Music from Grieg, the song and reflection contributed significantly to the spiritual atmosphere. The behaviour of all children throughout was good. Children enjoy collective worship. They talk about their favourite songs and clearly articulate the impression they make on the worship experience.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Children make good progress overall in religious education (RE) although standards of attainment vary from satisfactory to good. This was evident in a scrutiny of children's work. The recent trial of a class scrapbook, based upon 'The Good Samaritan', showed evidence of annotated and assessed attainment which reflected that good progress was made. This good practice is to be adopted throughout the school. Displays throughout the school, where they are at their best, are interactive and therefore more relevant and engage children in the religious education units taught. Through the creative approach to the curriculum children are given many opportunities to enhance their learning through discussion. For example pupils in a year 2 class, through their study of 'symbols', were asked to consider the question, 'what did Jesus mean when he said, I am the light of the world'? They respond eagerly to these opportunities and are able to share their experiences as examples to support their reflection.

For example, one child commented on the use of lighted candles on a birthday cake and during worship. These opportunities to engage as a class, group or partner in discussions show that children have a sound knowledge of RE and are able to use this to develop their understanding of the meaning of faith and belief. Teacher assessment is integral to all lessons with end of unit evaluations and teacher comments. The school uses the Local Authority agreed syllabus and the recent introduction of a revised scheme is being closely monitored by the subject leader. She has a good understanding of the contribution that RE makes to the life of the school and has accurately identified priorities to take the subject forward. She is very effective in her role providing good support through lesson observations and work scrutiny. The scheme of work provides children with good opportunities to study a broad range of faiths. For example, Judaism is studied alongside Christianity and there are elements of Hinduism as part of a study of India, the Chinese New Year and African Dance. However, children's understanding of their studies of Judaism is less well developed than Christianity. In the year one lesson observed, as part of the unit 'Belonging', learners were asked to consider, how Christians show that they belong? The lesson was well planned with good pace, teaching and learning. The best teaching was seen when skilful questioning by the teacher brought a range of responses linked to learners' own experiences moving to Baptism and belonging to God's family. In year two, children rose to the level of challenge when addressing the difficult concept of Jesus as the light of the world. Children were able to recall a previous lesson in response to questions and to use these to consider why Jesus said he was the light of the world. There was good use of the interactive whiteboard and children gave good responses relating to use of light in relation to safety. For example, 'a lighthouse keeps ships safe' and 'lights keep us safe in the dark' and Jesus keeps us safe. The differentiated activities allowed children to engage in the lesson and make progress. The high level of support for children with learning needs made a significant impact on their level of progress. However, a more able group, who worked mainly without support, made satisfactory progress. The school is aware that there needs to be a more rigorous evidence base that identifies children's progress in RE and which provides a clearer picture of standards as well as identifying areas for improvement.

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

Collectively all those involved in leadership and management are providing very good support. The headteacher is an inspirational leader who promotes the Christian vision of the school. She has established an effective team and is very well supported by the RE subject leader, the staff team and the governors. Relationships within the school are outstanding and this has a positive impact upon the care, guidance and support of all pupils which is a significant strength of the school. The headteacher and governors have placed a high priority on the development of RE and collective worship by including the RE subject leader as a member of the school's senior leadership team. The RE subject leader's contribution is proving very effective at moving the school forward. This is reflected in the SDP which includes an annual goal and action plan related to the Christian foundation. She is developing a creative approach with good resources and annual budget provision. Foundation governors are committed and involved and well informed about the school enabling them to offer effective challenge because they play a full part in the self evaluation process. They contribute to and approve all policies. Governors have a number of skills and training which they bring to the school to benefit learners and their families. The school prospectus is informative and statutory obligations are met. The school has the Healthy Schools, Artsmark and the Eco Bronze awards. The leadership team contributes significantly to spiritual, moral and social development of all learners. For example, a teaching assistant trained in delivering 'peer massage' was observed with Reception children who entered the school in January. The calm approach and effect on children provides a good basis for spiritual development. Cultural development is less well developed and the school has plans for links with a school in an area where there is greater cultural diversity. All areas for development at the last SIAS inspection have been fully addressed.