



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Collaton St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Blagdon Road

Paignton  
TQ3 3YA

**Diocese: Exeter**

Local authority: Torbay

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Date of last inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007

School's unique reference number: 113476

Headteacher: Penny Millington

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jackie Rudman 601

#### **School context**

Collaton St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is situated on the south coast of Devon. It is of average size with the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those who have English as a second language, lower than the national average. A higher than average number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly associated with the acquisition of emotional, language or literacy skills. The school has received a number of awards in recognition of its work.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Collaton St Mary Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Collaton St Mary Voluntary Aided Primary School is a vibrant school with a confident understanding of its own Christian distinctiveness. It is rooted and grounded in prayer and its impact reaches beyond the school community.

#### **Established strengths**

- The strong commitment by the headteacher, governors and leadership team to place Christian values at the heart of the school
- The prayer life of the school which strengthens relationships
- Strong church and community links

#### **Focus for development**

- Embed the recently introduced initiatives in religious education and monitor and evaluate their impact on children's developing spirituality

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

Christian values of friendship, forgiveness, trust, peace and compassion are at the heart of the school's daily life. They are reflected in the school's mission statement to see God in everyone, in the open relationships between all members of the school community and in the delight that children have in talking about their school to visitors. Children particularly speak of the school values in connection with the prayer life of the school. They enjoy sharing topics for prayer before lessons in the morning and afternoon. As one child said, 'prayer makes you feel peaceful – that's one of our values.' These values are explored individually on a regular basis and are reflected in the depth of the children's understanding. One outcome of this is that children develop excellent debating skills. This enables them to discuss, at a high level, challenging questions such as 'Is Jesus a superhero?' Teachers encourage high quality interchange of ideas and because each contribution is valued, all

children are given the confidence to articulate their opinions with conviction and confidence. Parents affirm that the school places equal value on every child. Some parents have chosen to send their children to the school because of its Christian ethos, but the majority of parents say they have no church affiliation, but find the loving, caring atmosphere an affirmation of their own family life. In particular parents appreciate the open-door policy of the school. They say that school deals immediately with any problems or difficulties and that they trust teachers and support staff, including dinnertime staff, to show love to every child. As a result children really enjoy coming to school and develop exceptionally close relationships with school staff. These relaxed relationships mean that children feel comfortable to ask for adult or peer support in tasks or situations they find more challenging, but also have the confidence to work independently. Lessons are well planned and matched to the age and ability of the children. Therefore children are fully engaged in learning. The school also makes excellent provision to support children's personal emotional journey through school. For example within the support for transition there is the Buddy Scheme where older children take responsibility for the younger children. Both children and parents identified this as a major element in affirming the Christian character of the school. As one reception child told me, 'I love my buddy, he looks after me.' Strategies such as this are embodied in the life of the school. They are often endorsed by outstanding displays in classrooms or public areas of the school. Therefore there is a cohesive unity between strategic decisions and practical action. The school really does live out its ethos in every aspect of its daily life.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

High quality acts of worship and the many opportunities for the community to come together to share prayer hold a central place in the life of the school and make an outstanding impact on the spiritual life of the local community. Collective worship is highly valued by staff, parents and children, who come to worship with quiet reverence and expectation. All children and staff attend and agree that worship makes the day feel different. As a consequence children gain a real depth of spiritual insight and are able to talk with confidence about their developing faith. As one child commented, 'we are happy in this school because we know God is always there to help us.' Worship is usually held at the end of the school day. Parents say this makes a good impact on children's homecoming behaviour because they leave school with a sense of peaceful calm. Parents of all faiths, and those who lay no claim to faith, appreciate the opportunity to be with their children in times of worship. They recognise that worship at school is an integral part of community life and strengthens their common identity. They say worship is refreshing, and cite times when the whole school has responded to personal or community crisis with public prayer. Worship broadly follows the churches calendar and includes half-termly Eucharist led by local clergy and held in the school. Children respond enthusiastically to these services and talk about Jesus body being bread and his blood the wine. In gathering around the Lord's table their understanding of being part of the family of God is strengthened and nurtured, family life is affirmed and children gain personal and spiritual confidence. In order to further nurture this, school has developed a range of ways in which children can be active participators in daily acts of worship. These include leading prayers, giving technical support for audio and visual equipment, sharing the grace as well as planning some elements within the services. Consequently children look forward with interest to variety in worship. They speak with great excitement about the time their eggs hatched in time for the Easter services as well as nativity plays and harvest celebrations. The local parish clergy give very good support by leading worship on a weekly basis. As a consequence of clergy visits, and also using the church building as part of RE lessons, the children are able to gain good experiences of Anglican traditions and practice. Led by the headteacher, staff meet weekly for silent or led prayer. This time of quiet reflection enhances staff relationships and provides an opportunity for a thoughtful space during the busy week. There are good systems of monitoring the impact of collective worship. School are aware that this needs to be extended to include a system whereby children can play a greater role in the evaluation process as well so that its impact on their spiritual understanding can be more fully determined.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Religious education (RE) is at heart of the whole curriculum and very strong cross-curricular links are a particular strength of planning throughout the school. For example, during forest school lessons children are encouraged to stop and reflect on the natural world around them. Children's work books are of a high quality and reflect the importance that school places on the subject. As well as children's own work books there is a successful system of keeping scrapbooks to show work relating to RE beyond the written. Contributions to these scrap books are made throughout the year and build into a valuable and consistent collection of children's learning throughout the school. They make a significant contribution to the regular monitoring and evaluation of the subject indicating that the RE is well-planned. There is an even balance between learning about religion and learning from religion. The effect of RE is good. Attainments are in line with those of other subjects nationally and children make good progress. Achievements have risen and the school has correctly identified that they will continue to rise. RE is skilfully taught and therefore engages children who are drawn into lessons with real interest and enthusiasm. For instance after watching the teacher use props to illustrate the story of the prodigal son, a variety of carefully planned independent activities including drama, small world play, independent writing and art was used to help the children further engage with the story and embed their understanding. School have identified the key role that RE has in nurturing spiritual growth and knowledge of the Christian faith in children. Therefore they are trialling new ways of presenting lessons in exciting and dynamic ways. One of these involves the introduction of the 'Godly play' system for the younger children. It is too early to assess the impact of this in the long term, but recent observations indicate it to be highly effective in developing and nurturing children's spiritual perception. There is a good balance between Christianity and that of other religions. In particular the visit to the Islamic Centre Mosque was treated with sympathetic sensitivity. As a result children learn to respect people of all faith and of none. Sensitive marking of children's work is given a high priority by the coordinator. The best marking forms a dialogue between child and teacher and is effective in helping children to reflect on their learning. There is a good variety of extra events such as the Banner Project in which Christian understanding supports art and design. Children are delighted with the art work around the school and are pleased to show visitors the banners in the hall and prayer trees in classroom. As well as a reminder of past experience these high quality displays endorse the school's emphasis on RE as the core of the curriculum.

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

The headteacher has a profound understanding of how to develop Christian distinctiveness by sharing her vision with others. Working in harmony with the governors and leadership team she guides the school with a quiet and professional confidence. As a result all policies and strategic decisions are underpinned by Christian values, and relationships have an honest integrity which enables all to flourish. As leaders and managers the senior team have developed systems which ensure that the whole school community plays an active role in identifying the Christian values which underpin its ethos. The mission statement forms part of each policy, reminding the school community that one of its primary purposes is to see God in everyone. Because of this whole-school rationale staff, parents and children have very clear perceptions of Christian values. Governors are fully supportive of the school and take a hands-on approach, for instance coming into the school regularly and talking to parents and children. They make an excellent contribution to the very thorough school self evaluation systems by working with the head teacher to analyse data concerning children's achievement and attainment. The headteacher is the RE coordinator and this reflects the high status that the subject is given within the life of the school. She is passionate about the contribution that RE can make to a child's education and ensures that the subject is effectively monitored and evaluated. She has an excellent understanding of how to continue to take the subject forward. There is a particularly strong link with the local Christian community. For example children regularly contribute to the church quarterly magazine and church members host

regular coffee mornings for parents in the school's community room. Further church links are enhanced by the vicar's attendance at these. As one member of staff commented, 'there are two-way links between school and church.' The school outside environment is extensively used to promote the Christian mission of the school. The recently established sensory garden, the woodland area and the adventure park are a few examples of how the environment enhances the curriculum and extra-curriculum activities. Children are especially proud of the vegetable garden which produces food for school dinners. The excellent work of the kitchen and mealtime staff has made the school community aware of food miles and the disparity of food distribution throughout the world. Children speak of sourcing sustainable food and have a knowledgeable interest in Fair Trade issues. This has led to practical action such as supporting the work of Christian Aid and the Peruvian flood disaster fund. The headteacher speaks of giving children thinking tools to be reflective learners. The school has clearly achieved this. It has also given its children a delight in learning within this outstandingly Christian school community. As parents have commented, 'children in this school have an overwhelming, genuine happiness in coming to school.'

SIAS report September 2011 Collaton St Mary Voluntary Aided Primary School, Paignton  
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