



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Morchart Bishop Church of England VA Primary School, Church Street, Morchart Bishop, Crediton, EX17 6PJ.

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Date of inspection: July 14th 2008

Date of last inspection: 23rd – 27th February 2004

School's unique reference number: 113457

Headteacher: Mrs Ann Palmer

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jenny Pestrige (153)

School context

The school is situated in a small village, and the 111 learners come from the local area and surrounding villages. There are an above average number of boys in the school, (57%) which means that in some cohorts there is a gender imbalance. The school occupies an extensive site, providing a large playing field and a swimming pool.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Morchart Bishop Church of England VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

A well-established Christian ethos underpins the curriculum. This ethos is also reflected in caring, friendly relationships. The focus on enrichment activities means that learners are being given outstanding opportunities for spiritual development. The partnership with the two local Christian Churches is making a significant contribution to the school's emphasis on serving the whole community.

Established strengths

- The clear Christian mission statement and the commitment of the Headteacher, governors and staff to its implementation in the life of the school
- The opportunities for creativity and a focus on an experiential curriculum, especially the forest school for Key Stage 1 learners.
- The involvement of learners in the regular planning and leading of the weekly act of worship.

Focus for development

- Create a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, emphasising the ways in which the school implements the mission statement.
- Include the mission statement in the prospectus. Make clear links between the mission statement and the policies for collective worship and religious education.
- Ensure that comprehensive information regarding the governance of the school is available for parents.

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

The school's emphasis on co-operation and collaboration means that relationships at every level are friendly, supportive and welcoming. As a result, learners are happy and confident. They especially enjoy the school's emphasis on creativity and enrichment activities. These include music, sport, outdoor activities, the arts week, and projects that focus on care for the environment. This emphasis on creativity in the curriculum is enabling learners to develop excellent spiritual, moral, social, and cultural skills. There is an explicit emphasis on Christian spirituality and learners are developing a confidence in expressing their thoughts about God as creator. The series of visits to the forest school for Key Stage 1 learners is providing outstanding opportunities for spiritual development. This is because, in the lesson observed, the visiting outdoor activity teacher emphasised an awareness of awe and wonder as a celebration of God's creation. A combination of mud, birdsong, wild honeysuckle and hot chocolate created an unforgettable experience for learners. This is resulting in an outstanding impact on learners' verbal skills, because they are having an adventure in a different environment. The links between the school's educational philosophy and its approach to spiritual development are not currently summarised in a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The range of enrichment activities provided by the school means that all learners are able to develop key skills, to make progress and to achieve. The partnership with the local parish Church and the Methodist Church is making a significant impact in the lives of learners. These relationships with the community are supporting a range of experiences provided for learners.

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

The management of collective worship reflects strategic, long-term planning. Resources and SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) material are used appropriately. This means that learners are experiencing stimulating themes, in a variety of styles. Learners plan and lead one act of worship weekly, which represents best practice. In the Key Stage 2 act of worship observed, learners used the lighting of a candle and a focus table to create a special atmosphere. Thoughtful planning on the theme of being bold included the use of a Bible text, and a PowerPoint presentation on the life of Amy Johnson. As a result, the excellent behaviour of the Key Stage 2 learners reflected their interest. Learners' participation included the use of percussion instruments, and the whole occasion illustrated the school's emphasis on collaborative working. Learners are involved in a bi-annual formal evaluation process, which results in effective changes to collective worship. The involvement of the parish priest and the Methodist Church in leading worship is providing learners with a variety of experiences. Learners enjoy collective worship, and comment particularly on their involvement in the weekly programme. Prayer, including the Lord's Prayer, is a regular part of the life of the school. Learners write their own prayers for use in worship, which is good practice. The links between the school's mission statement and the policy for collective worship are not fully expressed. It is not made entirely clear that all acts of worship are specifically Christian, reflecting the school's voluntary aided, Church of England status. The weekly inclusion of parents in collective worship, emphasises the sense of the school community as family, and is good practice.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Religious education is well led and managed by the coordinator, reflecting her enthusiasm for the subject. Initiatives that indicate her rigorous approach include assessment and a portfolio of learners' work. The standard of learners' written work ranges from satisfactory to good in both Key Stages. Marking does not significantly reflect the learning objectives in all classes. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good in both Key Stage 1 and 2. In Key Stage 2, learners were given the opportunity to consider the impact made by encounters with Jesus. Because of challenging questions regarding the positive and negative impact of these encounters, learners were able to empathise with Biblical characters. Good planning reflected both learning about and learning from religion (Attainment Targets 1 and 2) and included opportunities for creative responses. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, learners considered the

importance and practice of prayer for Muslims. The variety of resources used, including Islamic artefacts and video clips, provided a good stimulus. As a result, learners enjoyed the lesson and were attentive. An opportunity to reflect on the significance of prayer for people of faith extended learners' thinking skills. An emphasis on respect for others meant that learners were given opportunities to develop key life skills. Learners in both Key Stages have a good knowledge of the main beliefs of the Christian faith, and of significant festivals. Learners in Key Stage 1 have some knowledge of a Hindu festival. This knowledge is extended for Key Stage 2 learners, who were able to explain the Hindu belief of reincarnation. This is an indication of the good progression within the schemes of work for Christianity and Hinduism. Knowledge of other world religions is satisfactory. Learners enjoy religious education, as expressed by a Key Stage 2 learner, "RE gives you a challenge."

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

The Headteacher provides strong leadership, which is summarised in the mission statement, "Christianity is the basis of all we do." She is supported by committed foundation governors and staff. As a result, the Christian ethos is both implicitly and explicitly expressed in the life of the school. Christian values and principles are believed by the incumbent to be, "a natural part of the school." Because of this, learners are confident and comfortable in their regular visits to the Church, for key festivals and in connection with the religious education curriculum. The Church / school partnership is an explicit expression of faith and provides a Christian framework for serving the community in the village. The mission statement is visible at the entrance to the school, providing an explicit expression of the school's Christian ethos. However, some opportunities to express the implementation of the mission statement in the curriculum are underdeveloped. For example, this is not expressed through policies or in the prospectus. The practical support of governors to the learners through the curriculum is good. For example, governors listen to readers, are involved with cookery lessons, help with the gardening club, and join the learners on visits. An outstanding contribution is made by one current foundation governor, who has created a clearing on his forested land, for use by Key Stage 1 learners. His enthusiasm and interest in the environment as a committed Christian, provides a contagious role model for learners. Some parents state that they are not aware of the statutory constitution of the governing body, or of the process for appointing new governors. A passion for a broad, enriched curriculum by the Headteacher and governors is providing learners with excellent opportunities for spiritual development. These are provided in both the arts and in the care of the environment.

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