

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Bede's, Church of England (VA), Junior School

Bush Lane
Send
Woking GU23 7HP

Diocese of Guildford

Local authority: Surrey
Date of inspection: 8 December 2011
Date of last inspection: 19 January 2009
School's unique reference number: 125218
Headteacher: Mr D Lees (Interim Executive Headteacher)
Inspector's name and number: Dr Glyn Willoughby (NSI 637)

School context

St Bede's Church of England Aided Junior School, with 229 children, serves the village of Send and the surrounding area. The majority are of white British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion speaking English as an additional language and those eligible for free school meals are below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The headteacher took up post at the start of the academic year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bede's, Church of England (VA), Junior School as a Church of England school are good

St Bede's has a distinctive Christian ethos characterised by high quality relationships within a caring and stimulating environment. This is enriched through adults who are excellent role models for children to emulate and by the partnership with the church. As a result children respond in kind, develop respect for each other, and grow in confidence to become responsible and compassionate young people.

Established strengths

- The commitment of staff and governors to maintaining the caring Christian community which nurtures the pastoral needs of each child.
- The importance of worship and its impact on spiritual development.
- The clear Christian vision and passion of the vicar in sustaining the strong partnership between church and school.

Focus for development

- Identify the core values which lie at the heart of the school's success and explore how these promote spirituality.
- Embed the newly-developed system for the assessment of RE so that pupils become more involved in the process.
- Increase the level of formal involvement of governors in the self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the school as a church school.

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

The distinctive Christian ethos permeates throughout this caring school and results in happy, safe and secure children who, as one parent said, 'know they can succeed'. The trusting relationships, evident throughout the school, result from the commitment of staff to ensure the ethos is sustained for the benefit of all children. They appreciate the positive impact of their teachers upon their personal and academic attainment.

Opportunities to take part in an extensive range of activities including sport, music and the creative arts enhance the stimulating learning environment. In this environment children gain in confidence to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally as they openly explore and reflect upon their thoughts and feelings. In order to gain a clearer understanding of how the

distinctive Christian ethos promotes spirituality, the school plans to identify the core values which lie at the heart of its success. This will enable children and staff to explore together how these values promote spirituality with even greater clarity.

Concern for supporting each other extends to the wider community as shown by the many opportunities to be involved in fund raising for charities, both local and international. These opportunities as well as activities, such as arts week, enable children to develop a very good awareness of the local and wider world and their place in it. The school ensures that children of all faiths and none are valued as individuals and treated with respect within, as a parent described, the 'close-knit community'.

The Christian ethos impacts upon the very good behaviour throughout the school and any misunderstandings are resolved in a spirit of reconciliation with the prevailing attitude of everyone having the opportunity to make 'a fresh start', sometimes on many occasions.

The worship and areas for reflection in each classroom and the display in the entrance hall are good examples of the many ways in which the school environment significantly contributes to spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily collective worship forms an important part of the life of the school and makes a significant impact upon spiritual development. Children speak enthusiastically about their enjoyment of worship and how it enables them to 'think about other people across the world who live differently to us' and, as a result, 'learn to appreciate what we have'.

Throughout a very well led worship, all children were fully engaged and responded maturely, with a number actively involved in leading and supporting. They developed their understanding of global communities as they listened with interest to a member of staff recounting his experience of working in a school in Cambodia. Afterwards they confirmed that one of the reasons they like worship is because 'teachers talk about their experiences in other countries'. The appreciative response shown by the children towards the member of staff who spoke and also towards fellow pupils, whether by playing a flute solo or reading prayers, provided evidence of the caring and supportive ethos. The enthusiastic singing and keen attention demonstrated the positive and confident manner so characteristic of the school.

Children value the opportunity to participate in the period for prayer and reflection and there was a clear sense of purposeful respect and calm throughout. A child explained how prayer provides him with personal support: 'If you are worried about something, when you are praying, you can relate it to you'.

All staff attend worship and this demonstrates the importance of worship within the life of the school. The vicar makes a significant impact on the children's spirituality through regularly leading worship that often makes a lasting impression upon those present. Visits to the local church during the year are described as 'inspiring' enabling children to gain a very good understanding of Anglican practice.

The opportunity to celebrate different cultures and faiths within the worship programme enables children to further their understanding of global communities as well as enhancing their spiritual and cultural development.

Worship is well-planned and children spoke of welcoming the opportunity of being involved in, and actively leading, worship. Regular informal reviews involving the vicar, staff and children provide feedback that is used for future planning.

The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in Religious Education (RE) are good and children make good progress across the key stage. Results are in line with other core subjects.

Very good practice was evident in the way assessment procedures, combined with a rigorous tracking system, are used to monitor and ensure effective progress. The subject is effectively led with the leader regularly monitoring progress across the school and ensuring children are provided with opportunities to respond to marking of their work. Learning is enhanced through constructive guidance in response to each child's assessment of their understanding of the

learning intentions of the lesson. Plans are being finalised to support staff to embed the newly-developed system for monitoring and assessment of RE so that pupils become more involved in the process.

Observations confirmed that the quality of teaching is good because teachers use a wide range of resources and teaching strategies to stimulate active participation and secure very good progress. Two RE lessons were observed and, in both, children made very good progress as they were motivated, challenged and fully engaged in considering issues that made a strong contribution to their spiritual and moral development. One involved children in considering what Christianity says about relationships as they discussed whether a television presenter with a disability should be allowed to continue to present her programme even though complaints had been received from some viewers. Children demonstrated their growing confidence to openly explore their thoughts and beliefs with one commenting 'she should keep her job because it doesn't matter what is on the outside. What matters is what is on the inside!'

Both lessons were characterised by a calm, purposeful atmosphere that was effectively used by staff to encourage children to reflect and carefully think through their responses to the tasks set. They clearly enjoy the subject with a child commenting 'it teaches the right way to go with life'.

Thought provoking discussions through regular involvement of the vicar and youth team leaders enable children to gain a deeper understanding of Christian faith and practice.

Enriching the RE curriculum through links with other subject areas such as music and creative arts enables children to gain an appreciation of religious and cultural diversity locally and globally.

The school meets the statutory requirement for religious education.

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

The interim executive headteacher has a clear vision of the way in which the school's distinctive Christian ethos enriches the experiences of children. He identifies the considerable commitment and potential of staff in successfully sustaining this distinctiveness and is introducing a wider distribution of leadership to enhance opportunities for professional development.

This vision is shared by the vicar who, as vice chair of governors, has been instrumental in developing the strong partnership between church and school, strengthening and improving upon the strong position at the time of the previous inspection. Offering guidance, support and challenge, he is highly regarded and respected by children and adults alike. His pastoral support and care for staff, children and parents is deeply appreciated and a governor referred to him as 'a living example of the school'.

Governors are very involved in the life of the school and by regular monitoring have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. There is no complacency in the governing body and the leadership team and the areas for development arising from the previous inspection have been effectively addressed. Governors plan to build upon current review arrangements in order to develop a more precise system for evaluating the effectiveness of the school as a church school.

Procedures are in place to ensure the future leadership sustains the school's distinctive Christian ethos. Considerable benefit for staff and children, including professional and curriculum development, results from the support of the Diocese.

Children benefit considerably from the range of links with the local community and the world wide church, as well as extensive fund raising for local and international projects. The school is currently exploring and initiating further global links.

Many parents expressed positive views about the school and, in particular, the staff who, as one said, 'have created such a safe, caring community'. Another spoke of how the staff 'have been brilliant in building up my daughter's confidence'. The PTA is extremely active and the relationship between staff, parents and governors is very strong reflecting the ethos of mutual support and appreciation that is evident throughout the school.