

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Buckland St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Buckland St Mary,
Chard,
Somerset
TA20 3SJ

Diocese: Bath & Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: 28 June 2010

Date of last inspection: September 2007

School's unique reference number: 123826

Headteacher: Susan English

Inspector's name and number: Sandra Symonds - 109

School context

Buckland St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary school is a small rural primary school with 51 pupils on roll educated in 2 mixed age classes. The school draws children from Buckland St Mary and Otterford and there are some children who travel from Chard. The school has had a falling roll over the past three years but the school is optimistic that this will change. Attainment on entry is good, with only a small proportion of children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Buckland St Mary Church School as a church school are good

Buckland St. Mary Church of England V.A. Primary school is a good church school where learners feel valued and special. It is effective in its practice and has a good reputation within the community. At its core is its caring ethos which permeates school life

Established strengths

- The Christian values of respect and caring for each other which are shared by the whole school and are clearly seen in the behaviour and attitudes of the children.
- Relationships within the school community which are exemplary
- The strong links with the church and the community

Focus for development

- To fully implement assessment for learning in Religious Education (RE) and to include children's own assessment.
- To develop the role of the Foundation governors to include effective church school self evaluation

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding in the way it meets the needs of all learners

The school makes excellent provision to meet the needs of all its learners. Learners from all groups feel valued and special and the school's commitment to valuing and developing the individual is a strength of the school. Its motto is 'Everyone matters' and it certainly lives up to this statement. As one parent commented: "Relationships are so strong that the children understand they can show their opinions but need to be compliant with the rules and regulations so that everyone can benefit". Children's care for each other is demonstrated through the use of a friendship bench and playground leaders. The school council gives opportunity for pupils' views to be heard and respected. Many extra-curricular and sporting activities give further opportunities for their social development and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Children's exemplary behaviour and willingness to learn is attributed, by the parents, to the value given to every individual and the fact that all areas of school life are embedded in Christian philosophy. Intervention groups such as ELS, Quest and 1-1 tuition aid pupils who need additional support. There is a good working atmosphere across the whole school and there are many artefacts around the school often created by the children,

celebrating its distinctive Christian nature. Learners make excellent progress in spiritual awareness. One pupil said “a spiritual moment is when your spirit lifts and you are really happy”. Another said it was “when we get really trusted in the classroom”.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The learners clearly articulate the importance of worship and the key Christian values that the school promotes. Acts of Worship are well planned on a half term basis and well recorded. It is imaginatively presented and led at times by visitors, many of whom are from the local churches. This provides pupils experience of various worship styles and traditions. The pupils could recall several that had had an impact on them, one in particular about the story of the Widow’s mite, where one pupil said it had taught him “not always to think that more is better”. The worship observed was linked to the whole–school SEAL unit on ‘Change’. Many of the children were involved, and good use was made of a prayer tree displayed on the wall, each leaf with a prayer written by a child. These prayers are used daily in worship, evidence of the value given to the children’s’ spirituality and to prayer. The Headteacher and pupils evaluate these activities, which contribute to the school’s ongoing improvement. One pupil said: “I really like the prayer tree because we can all do it”. Worship is consistently and recognisably Christian and honours the Anglican tradition. References to past acts of worship were clearly seen around the walls of the hall and the children were proud to point out their posters about Pentecost. The picture of Jesus being raised to Heaven was used very effectively in an RE lesson later in the day of the inspection.

The Religious Education is good

Religious Education is well planned, and effective teaching and learning ensures that standards are good and pupils make good progress. In the lessons observed pupils were able to talk openly about what they had been taught. For example in a Reception/Year 1/Year2 lesson pupils showed a growing awareness of the beauty of creation and God as creator. During discussion one child said “God made the trees, the flowers, the horses, the humans, metal, grass – the whole world”. In a lesson at KS2, from the Agreed Syllabus unit ‘Expression of Belief’ pupils showed empathy and respect. Later during discussion when asked about RE one learner said “You get a lot out of it and it makes you stronger in life”. Clearly, pupils enjoy RE and are able to see the relevance it has for their own lives. Teachers employ a variety of teaching methods and effective questioning. The school has recently established a system of assessment and now needs to develop this to include learners’ own assessment so their next steps for learning are clear to them. The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils’ spiritual and moral development. Schemes of work reflect the school Christian foundation and at the same time give opportunities to explore other faiths and cultures. The RE coordinator leads her subject well and with increased budget allocation, now plans to undertake further professional development.

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

The head teacher has only been in place since September 2009 and many members of the governing body, including the Chair, have changed in the past year. However, despite that it is clear that they contribute significantly to Buckland St Mary’s success as a church school. They have a good understanding of their local community and demonstrate a clear vision and high expectations based on Christian values. The local community is very supportive of the school and they are invited to a number of school functions. For example the school Cooking Club hosts a ‘Winter Warmer’ lunch for the community in January and a Tea and Coffee morning in the church is also run by the school. Links with the church are good. The local incumbent is on the governing body and leads collective worship regularly, together with members of other local churches. School worship is frequently held in the church building, especially at major festivals, when the whole village is invited. This contributes to the children’s understanding of Anglican faith and practice. The school also contributes to the church magazine, raising awareness of the school in the community. The governors have individual responsibilities, such as Special Educational Needs and Health & Safety, which they undertake well but they now need to develop their ability to support the school in its self-evaluation as a church school. RE and Collective Worship are well led and contribute to the school’s distinctive Christian character. The school is supporting a school in Zambia and has recently linked up with a school in an urban environment as part of its community cohesion

provision. The learners themselves decide the charity focus for their fund raising events. Parents are very aware of the school's church foundation and speak highly of the school and its level of care for the whole child.

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