

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Plymtree Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Plymtree
Cullompton
EX15 2JU

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 3rd December 2012

Date of last inspection: 26th November 2007

School's unique reference number: 113361

Headteacher: Mrs Patrica Fay

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jackie Rudman 601

School context

This is a much smaller than average-sized school with 63 children on roll. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than average. In November 2011 the school federated with two other small schools under a single governing body. In September the headteacher will retire and the three schools will be led by a single executive headteacher supported by heads of teaching and learning in individual schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Plymtree Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The distinctive Christian character of the school makes a highly positive impact on the lives of children and their families. It permeates every aspect of school life and underpins relationships. This creates a caring and supportive community in which all children make good academic progress and gain personal confidence. Strong church links affirm the school's distinctive Christian ethos and confirm its position within the local community.

Established strengths

- Clear Christian vision of the headteacher shared by all staff and governors
- Clearly identified Christian values which are recognised and supported by the whole school community
- Excellent relationships based on Christian principles

Focus for development

- Provide opportunities for children to regularly evaluate worship
- Develop ways to systematically assess the school's impact on children's developing spiritual awareness
- Develop spaces of quiet reflection within the school building and grounds

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

Since the last inspection the school has identified the Christian values of love and respect as the basis of its ethos. These still form the core of its Christian vision, but more recently consideration has been given to other values such as courage, friendship and peace. The result is that the culture of empathy and consideration for others has been strengthened and staff, children, governors and parents all appreciate and understand the Christian identity of the school which is lived out in its daily life. Relationships within the school community are of a high quality with mutual respect between staff, governors and parents. Consequently children are given excellent role models and understand the value of living within a community at peace with itself. They say that teachers are always fair and treat everyone with the same care and love. As a result of the care that they receive at school, children feel

valued; they make good progress and flourish as individuals. They gain a personal confidence and develop into compassionate and responsible young people with a strong foundation for their lives. Ex-pupils look back on their time at primary school as being one of great happiness and even after they have left the school its Christian influence continues to support children. As one ex-pupil wrote 'religion has been an important part of life because I went to a Christian primary school.' Parents value the way that staff show care towards all children, particularly when on residential trips or organising after-school clubs. They comment that teachers 'absolutely, genuinely love children' and that they never have to cajole children to come to school 'because they love being here.' They recognise that staff value children unconditionally as individuals, irrespective of ability, and that this has a very positive effect on children's self esteem and confidence. Parents of children with special needs are particularly appreciative of the expertise of teachers in drawing out the best from children. For example, the Buddy System which gives more vulnerable children a sense of safety and develops in others a real sense of responsibility, is highly valued by parents and children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is central to the life and purposes of the school. It is well planned on a 3-year rotation using Jumping Fish resources with themes linked to the churches year as well as the Every Child Matters agenda. There is a good balance between whole school, Key Stage and class worship. Consequently during the week children are given a rich experience of a variety of age-appropriate styles of worship. These have a positive impact on their developing spiritual understanding. A conceptual focus of a cross and other items is used to set worship apart from lessons, both in classrooms and the hall. These symbols help the children to come into worship quietly and reverently giving a focus for their attention. Music is used to good effect, both as children enter and leave and also to support singing. All teaching staff take an active part in leading worship and afterwards are able to share reflections, thoughts and feelings with the children. Consequently children and adults have developed a shared understanding of a spiritual journey and this enhances relationships and builds up trust. School is aware that it now needs to formalise this process and to give children a voice in the evaluation of worship. Children enjoy worship most when they are given an active role in drama or reading or leading prayers. They say that no-one is left out, but that everyone is given equal opportunities to take some part in worship. This affirms the way in which the school values each individual and helps children understand the nature of tolerance and care. Through worship children understand that the Bible is important in Christian culture and that life styles and values are based on its teaching. They say that worship in school helps them in their prayer life particularly in times of great sadness as they know that they can talk to God anywhere about anything. Links with the local church are very effective with the incumbent leading a weekly service in the church building and staff members serving on the parochial church council. The church building is used as an effective resource to support religious education and the wider curriculum and to supplement worship visual aids. For example the church Advent candle is used to assist worship and help children understand the church seasons. As a result children are familiar with Anglican practice and traditions as well as Christian signs and symbols. A recent questionnaire has given a higher profile to worship and led to parents being more aware of the invitation to join their children in church for these services.

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

Leadership of the school is outstanding. The headteacher has a clear Christian vision and the personal charisma to inspire staff and children alike. Her genuine love and care for children is evident throughout the school and demonstrated by her passion for individual children to achieve their best. The ethos committee, with its brief to promote the Christian character of the school and to strengthen its Christian vision, gives excellent support to the headteacher and together they have successfully fulfilled their respective roles. For instance when formulating the vision they identified as a first priority that Christian values should underpin everything that the school does. One of the results of this was a management decision to afford religious education the same status as core subjects within the school

development plan. Within the plan also is the priority of supporting children's spiritual development by the introduction of 'windows, doors and mirrors system.' This now needs now be fully embedded in the assessment system if the school is to accurately monitor and evaluate its impact on the spiritual development of its children. The indoor school environment indicates its Christian character with creative and imaginative wall displays which illustrate Christian stories and teaching. It would be further enhanced by the provision of quiet spaces for reflection and contemplation within learning areas. The school's grounds are well designed for supporting children's physical, mental and academic development. Thought now needs to be given as to the contribution they make to children's spiritual development. Being in a newly-formed federation has presented the school with new challenges of governance, but it has also given a unique new dynamic and opportunity to expand provision and staff development. Most impressive within the vision of the leadership is the way that potential leaders have been identified and given the opportunity within such a small school to experience management positions. As a result when the headteacher retires at the end of this academic year the school will be left in experienced and competent hands within the new federation.

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