

Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Report

School:	Shipham Church of England First School, Turnpike Road, Shipham, Winscombe, Somerset BS25 1TX
Status:	Voluntary Controlled
Diocese:	Bath and Wells
Local Authority:	Somerset County
Date of Inspection;	8 October 2009
Date of last Inspection:	15 March 2007
School's unique ref. no.	123812
Name of Head teacher:	Mrs Antonia Gwynn
Chair of Governors:	Mr David Davenport
Inspector's name & NS no:	Mr David Williams (NS no 599)

School Context

Shipham Church of England First School is situated in the village of Shipham in Somerset. The majority of the pupils live within the village with a small number travelling from nearby villages and towns within a few miles travelling distance. The 65 children on roll are all from a white British background. The number of children with special educational needs is below the national average.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Shipham Church of England First School as a Church school are outstanding

Shipham Church of England First School is an outstanding church school which is underpinned by Christian values that lie at the heart of the school's life. The exemplary leadership and commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors in promoting the distinctive features of a church school ensure that all children

are nurtured in a secure caring environment that allows them to flourish as individuals and as part of the larger church school family.

Established Strengths

- The leadership of the headteacher and governors in ensuring that Christian values underpin the life of the school
- The commitment and involvement of all staff in the care and guidance for each pupil
- The excellent relationships that exist between the whole school community based on Christian values
- The high quality Religious Education (RE) teaching which strongly supports the Christian ethos of the school

Focus for development

- Provide professional development opportunities for staff that will further strengthen the school's church school status
- Pupils and staff to consider ways in which the Christian distinctiveness of the school may be further enhanced visually in classrooms and within the school grounds
- Develop ways in which pupils can further contribute to collective worship by taking a greater lead

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

The caring ethos of the school is evident in the high quality of relationships at all levels and across the full spectrum of school life. There is a strong sense of trust and community in the school. Parents speak consistently of the way in which their children are valued and supported by all staff. They are able to relate this to the demonstration of Christian values of care and concern for all which permeate throughout the school. There is a strong sense of the school being a family with one parent commenting, 'the children are all like cousins.' Teachers are approachable and parents value the way in which school staff listen to their concerns and take immediate action to resolve issues. A 'feelings peg-line' enables one class teacher to monitor how children in her class are feeling throughout the day. This is used effectively to provide sensitive encouragement to each child. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are excellent. One pupil declared, 'I've got lots of friends...63 of them...the whole school.' Pupils respect the adults in the school saying that they feel safe and like their teachers. In RE, the high quality teaching and learning make a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all children. Lessons go beyond learning about stories and pupils demonstrate the ability to apply what they have learnt practically. A recent lesson on harvest had highlighted the value of sharing the things that God has provided through creation. This led to one class deciding to make cup cakes to share with the whole school. The developing links with Zambia in addition to the positive relationship with the Hannah Moore school in Bristol excite the pupils and make a significant contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. The school building and grounds are very well maintained with lots of space and diverse play areas. At break-times pupils who feel left out or sad are able to go to the friendship bench or post where they are quickly joined by pupils offering to be their friend. The 'peaceful place', an area being developed, offers the

opportunity for spiritual development for individuals or whole classes. A parent in describing the way she values the school said, 'I can't put my finger on it – there is just something very special about this school.'

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

Collective worship holds an important and special part in school life. It is distinctively Christian and enjoyed by both adults and pupils alike. The presence of God is acknowledged through the use of symbols and an opening welcome which declares, 'The Lord is here and he loves everyone.' The atmosphere created through appropriate music and a visual focus enables pupils to be calm and reflective, ready to engage in worship. Attitudes to worship are exemplary with pupils enthusiastically joining in with singing Christian songs and listening carefully to bible stories which are effectively shared by the adult leading. The opportunity for reflection enables children to relate worship to their everyday life. One Year 4 pupil related the story of Jonah and the Whale to how it had reminded him not to be shy or run away from things that he might be scared of. The headteacher, who acts as the coordinator, ensures that collective worship is well resourced, and carefully planned. All staff are involved in leading worship and this too, makes a positive impact on pupils in relation to their attitudes and engagement. All pupils, regardless of faith or denominational background, take part in school worship including services which are held in the church at special times throughout the year. Excellent relationships exist between the school and church. Children and parents speak enthusiastically about the contribution made by the vicar, and the PCC also take a keen interest in the life of the school. The opportunity for parents and members of the PCC to join in the school's church services further strengthens the sense of family and community that are a part of the school's Christian ethos, of being a living expression of God's family.

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

The character of Shipham Church of England as a Christian village school is welcomed by the parents who value the impact this has on the education and welfare of their children. One parent commented, '...the school is an excellent school with the headteacher's faith flowing through it.' The headteacher's vision and passion for the school as being a place where the uniqueness of each pupil and adult is valued and celebrated, underpins its Christian ethos. Governors and staff are committed to ensuring that there is a strong Christian ethos throughout everything that happens in the life of the school. It is witnessed in their relationships and the commitment of governors to support school activities and to monitor and evaluate the school as a church school. Since the last inspection, the school's Christian foundation has been made explicitly clear in the school prospectus and in all policies. The focus of one section of the School Development Plan, is the school's Church of England Foundation. This, alongside references to the school's Christian character included in the Ofsted SEF, further demonstrates the commitment of governors to the school's foundation. Through a cooperative style of management the headteacher leads the staff to develop an understanding of the whole school as well as of their own class, which extends to supporting the broader aims of the school in serving the village community. Staff contribute to the improvement and development of the school and their ideas are included in the School

Development Plan. The school's leadership is effective in enabling all staff to feel they are able to play a full part in achieving the vision of the school. One staff member said, 'I feel very proud to be a part of the school.' RE is led by the headteacher who ensures that the subject is well planned. Foundation governors effectively monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning before reporting back to the full governing body. Staff, pupils and parents are all very much involved in evaluating the school's progress through both informal conversation and questionnaires. Pupils have been involved in reviewing the school's aims. Teachers re-wrote the aims in child-friendly speak. Class discussions in PSHE led to suggestions for ways to meet these aims. This too, contributes to the sense of belonging and worth felt by all. The school's style of leadership and management display a practical outworking of its Christian foundation and demonstrate the value placed upon everyone involved in any aspect of the school. This makes the school a significant and well-loved institution in the village. One parent summed up this view by saying, 'I feel so blessed that we have this school.'

This inspection was carried out on behalf of the Diocese of Bath & Wells in whose area the school is set, in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection framework used is that established by The National Society of the Church of England for the denominational inspection of church schools for all dioceses in England and Wales.

Your comments or complaints should be addressed to the Education Department, The Diocese of Bath & Wells, The Old Deanery, Wells, Somerset BA5 2UG. Further information about inspection of church schools can be obtained from the National Society's website at www.natsoc.org.uk.