



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Weare Academy Church of England First School

Weare
Axbridge
Somerset BS26 2JS

Diocese: Bath & Wells

Local authority: Somerset
Dates of inspection: 28th January 2013
Date of last inspection: 8th January 2008
School's unique reference number: 123813
Headteacher: Denise Mawdsley
Inspector's name and number: Muriel Griffiths NS268

School Context

Weare Academy Church of England First School has 147 pupils on roll and serves a largely rural area. The school was originally built in 1895 and in recent years has been built and extended. There is a hearing impaired unit and the majority of children are white British. In 2011, the school became the first 'First' school to be awarded Academy status. The headteacher took up her post last September.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Weare Academy Church of England First School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Weare Academy Church of England First School is distinctive and effective because of the excellent leadership and the strong Christian ethos which permeates all aspects of school life. The strong Christian vision of the headteacher is well supported by staff and governors in sustaining an ethos that has Christian values at its heart.

Established Strengths

- The school's outstanding Christian ethos, reflected in the excellent relationships and level of care throughout the school.
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher in creating the school's distinctive Christian character.
- The confidence of pupils in expressing their feelings and opinions as a result of the secure and accepting school ethos.

Focus for Development

- To continue to make the school's core Christian values more explicit so that the children have a better understanding that the values are rooted

in Christianity.

- Provide opportunities for pupils to be regularly involved in planning, leading and evaluating acts of worship.
- Further increase links with the church and local community.

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

Weare Weare Academy Church of England First School is an inclusive, caring and friendly community in which everyone feels valued and safe. There is a strong commitment to the development of the whole child within the context and environment of an extremely supportive school community. The school's inclusive and friendly ethos ensures that children make excellent progress both academically and in their personal development. Christian values and principles are central to the life of the school. They motivate the school community in their actions and decision making and therefore have a positive effect on pupils, such as in their roles as members of the school council, who are currently involved in developing the outdoor environment of the school. The excellent relationships throughout the school provide support for the learning environment. The school's ethos, aims and core Christian values have developed a climate within which pupils can grow and flourish and respect others and be respected. Children are proud of their school and understand how the Christian values impact on the school's daily life. For example, they understand how being a Church school helps them to have respect and care for one another. This is evident in worship where pupils show awareness of a more vulnerable child, carrying a cushion and helping her to settle down comfortably. Pupils are prompted to think of those less fortunate than themselves through fund raising for a number of charities, such as Children in Need and a centre for the homeless. Children thrive in an atmosphere of confidence and trust. This was evident in a religious education (RE) lesson observed on the day of the inspection, when the ten commandments were being discussed. Children were given a valuable opportunity to choose their own 'rules for living'. Pupils were confident to share their views because they knew that what they said would be valued both by their peers and adults. Collective worship, RE and the strong Christian ethos underpin pupils' spiritual, social and moral development, which is outstanding and makes a considerable contribution to their personal development. There are many opportunities provided for quiet reflection, such as in pupils' journals, when they reflect on experiences that have been meaningful to them. Christian symbols and artefacts are evident throughout the school, celebrating the school's Church of England foundation.

Older pupils clearly understand the school logo and write about its meaning, showing excellent insight into the importance of the school's Christian values and the strong emphasis on inclusion.

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

Collective worship is an enjoyable and meaningful part of daily life at Weare. Pupils speak about it as a time 'to learn about God and talk to him'. Children clearly have an excellent appreciation of its importance in the school day. They know that praying, reflecting, hearing Bible stories and singing are all important elements that contribute to daily worship. They talk about Bible stories that they especially remember and know that many of them have meanings that help

them to 'know how to live their lives'. They show a very positive response to worship, behave well and clearly see this special time in the day as important. They are also involved in evaluation of collective worship so that the school can discover its impact upon them. Collective worship is ably led by the headteacher and other members of staff in the school hall where the setting for worship uses an altar table with a candle and a cross to provide a visual focus for worship. On the day of the inspection, children were fully engaged in different elements of worship, such as singing, reflecting and joining in a number of responses, such as 'Jesus is the Light of the World', when the candle was lit. The headteacher, who was leading, with the help of a child painting a picture of poinsettias, assisted children in understanding that 'when God made us, everyone can work to be the best they can be'. Pupils say that they would enjoy more opportunities to be actively involved in planning and presenting worship. They especially enjoy services that are held in church to celebrate a number of Christian festivals, when they appreciate planning, leading and playing an active role. Parents also are pleased to join their children for worship on these occasions. The school offers many opportunities for children to pray and to write their own prayers. Prayers placed in the Prayer Box are used appropriately during collective worship, so emphasising the importance of talking to God. The vicar is a regular visitor to lead daily worship and is also involved in services held in church. Older children enjoyed the opportunity to go to Wells Cathedral 'on pilgrimage' which gave valuable insight into their experience of the wider Christian church and those who belong to it. A Pilgrim Prayer was written by the children for this occasion, ending appropriately with the words, 'You are always there for us as we grow'.

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

The headteacher's leadership is inspirational and her vision is communicated to all members of the school community. As a result, the headteacher, staff and governors very effectively develop this clear Christian vision, which is at the heart of the life of the school. It is promoted exceptionally well in all aspects of school life. This has meant that the Christian distinctiveness of the school has grown from strength to strength. The headteacher's spiritual leadership is strong, imaginative, creative and effective and ensures a permeating Christian ethos which is an outstanding feature of the school. The RE co-ordinator and leader of collective worship are also strongly committed to moving these areas forward. The headteacher and governors, through on-going self evaluation, seek constantly to promote further the school's church foundation. The governing body is fully supportive of the school's Christian character and is actively involved in ensuring that it is evident in practice and not just policy. Parents speak highly of the school. They like the caring ethos and feel that the children receive an excellent grounding in the importance of Christian values. Parents say that the links with the church, the role of the vicar in the life of the school and the emphasis on Christian values makes it clear that the school has a church foundation. The school has discovered that the majority of parents think that the school has a strong Christian ethos through consultation with them and so, highlighted the importance of the Church foundation. The school has good links with the diocese and staff and governors have benefited from attending a number of courses. This has helped the school to develop its Christian distinctiveness. The enthusiasm and commitment by the school's leadership and management ensure that the children of this school have every opportunity to grow and develop into mature, knowledgeable and caring young people.

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January 2013