

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Broadhembury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Broadhembury
Honiton
Devon
EX14 3NF

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon
Dates of inspection: 15th June 2010
Date of last inspection: 12th September 2007
School's unique reference number: 113349
Headteacher: Gaye Williams
Inspector's name and number: Jackie Rudman 601

School context

Broadhembury Church of England Primary School is a very small school of 31 pupils. All pupils are of white British origin and speak English as their first language. Pupils are taught in two mixed aged classes. There are a very high proportion of pupils with statements of special needs. (10%) The headteacher was formally appointed in April 2009 and both of the other teachers appointed in January 2010. Last year the school was re-classified as no longer in the 'causing concern' category.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Broadhembury Church of England Voluntary Controlled School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Broadhembury Church of England School is emerging from a time of instability. With the appointment of a new headteacher since the last inspection and the addition of new staff and governors there is an enthusiasm to renew the vision and develop the Christian distinctiveness of the school. The school now needs time to embed its developing Christian character within its daily life.

Established strengths

- The leadership of the headteacher who has inspired the school to refresh its strategic plan based on Christian values
- The strong relationships that exist between all staff which mean they have a common purpose to give love, care and support to all children
- Acts of worship that affirm and nurture children and adults within the school community

Focus for development

- Strengthen the Christian distinctiveness of the school by ensuring that the aims of the school explicitly reflect its Christian character
- Put into practice the strategic plan so that the central themes of love, forgiveness, trust and prayer identified by the school are embedded in daily school life
- Ensure acts of worship are of a consistently high quality by developing a system of regular planning, monitoring and evaluation

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

The strategic Christian vision for this delightful small school is still being developed as the majority of staff are recent appointments. However, high quality professional relationships

have already been established which are making a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school. Because of these relationships Christian love, joy and gentle humour permeate all aspects of the school. Children play and work happily together within this atmosphere because they feel loved. They enjoy coming to school, as one child said, 'everyday you look forward to coming to school because teachers make the lesson exciting'. Children are particularly articulate about the way Christian values underpin relationships. They say, 'no grown-up has any favourites, we are all treated the same'. Because staff value each child as an individual, all children including those with special needs, make good progress. Parents recognise that the Christian character of the school is being strengthened and this is impacting on the children. As one parent said, 'Christian values have become part of the children's lives, even the children's behaviour has changed for the better'. Parents also have a renewed assurance in the professional integrity of the headteacher and staff which are based on Christian principles of trust and fairness. Therefore parents feel able to share problems and concerns. They express confidence in the school to work with them in supporting children through difficult times. Parents also speak about strategies that the school uses to encourage and support the whole child. In this respect they are particularly appreciative of schemes such as the Peace Prize given by children, to children, which affirms that not all success in life is achieved by those academically clever or gifted in sport. As part of the local community, parents express delight that the school is now taking a proactive role within village activities such as the Circus Day. As one parent commented, 'I have waited so long for the school to be part of the community again'. Despite the recent progress, school recognise that Christian values now need to be further embedded within the daily life of the school if its Christian character and ethos are to continue making a positive impact on the lives of children. School is aware that children's knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity comes through the curriculum rather than direct experience at school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Both children and adults gain affirmation in worship, but because records are limited and worship is not yet formally evaluated it is not possible to gain a true picture of its consistency and impact. However daily worship is important to the school and by changing its time to the morning, the head teacher has confirmed its centrality in the life of the school. Children engage in school worship with enthusiasm. They listen well, respond actively and sing with enthusiasm. They break into spontaneous songs of worship at the end of service. This emotional response to worship is nurtured by the creative ways in which the school approaches prayer. Using pebbles, notes, labels and a prayer tree even the youngest children can voice personal prayers. They speak with enthusiasm about the prayer tree and talk about making leaves from their hands in the context of worship. This enthusiasm for worship means that children are always willing to volunteer to read in church or to take an active role in adult led worship in school. The headteacher is skilful at leading worship and at the time of the inspection led an outstanding act of worship made relevant to the school context. For instance when sharing the story of the Good Shepherd she used familiar mathematical strategies to engage the children in counting the sheep. Prayer, music and activities were all planned to support the story and enhance understanding of the Christian message. Staff attend worship and this offers a good role model to the children, who often talk to their class teachers about worship themes during other lessons. Evidence of past worship themes are displayed around the school which enhances the environment and confirms its Christian distinctiveness. However, despite good experiences of worship in school, worship in church is not viewed so positively by all the children. A governor survey discovered that some children, particularly boys, were disengaged with worship in church. They had many and various suggestions as to how worship in church could be more relevant to their lives. School continue to consider responses to the survey but have already made small but significant changes which have meant that worship in church is now more relevant to the school community. As a result parental involvement with worship has increased. They appreciate the opportunities school gives them for worshipping with their children. As one mother commented, 'Thursday is one of my best mornings'. However, the involvement of the school is primarily concerned with the church building, and children have few opportunities to

experience Anglican worship which is relevant and age appropriate. Therefore, although children are being nurtured within the love of God at school, as yet they have a limited understanding and knowledge of Anglican practices and traditions.

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

Recent changes in the governing body have resulted in a fresh approach to the affirmation of Christian distinctiveness. Under the inspirational leadership of the recently appointed headteacher, governors and staff, with input from children and parents, have developed a strategic plan which confirms the Christian character of the school. Whilst this will take time to take full effect it has meant that the whole school community has been involved in developing its Christian mission and is committed to its purpose. Therefore the impact of the plan is already making a positive difference to the Christian character of the school. The plan itself outlines good opportunities for embedding the Christian vision into the everyday life of the school. In particular it sets out to establish, monitor and evaluate a coordinated whole-school approach to supporting and nurturing the spiritual development of children. For example, medium term curriculum plans for next year are at an early stage but already staff have identified opportunities for spiritual reflection which will be incorporated into curriculum schemes of work. As well as securing the future Christian character of the school, the plan has also affected its present Christian ethos. This is because children have been involved in identifying core Christian values which are at the heart of the school. By investigating values such as Christian love, trust, and the importance of prayer they are beginning to understand the Christian faith more fully and gaining in personal confidence. As one child said, 'being at this school and talking about my beliefs will help me when I go to the big school to have confidence in myself'. Governors are aware of the need to include a spiritual dimension within their own particular role if the school is to continue to progress as a Christian community. Governors work hard to support the school. Governor minutes now need to reflect the depth of their commitment and the quality of judgements which have resulted in raising standards throughout the school. Parents are well informed about the Christian distinctiveness of the school through the weekly Newsletter. This also details church and community events which contribute to community cohesion. The school has already identified ways in which they can develop a greater involvement with the local community as well as links with the global Christian community. With a community united in its desire to support Christian education for its children, with a renewed Christian vision from the governors and with good staff relationships underpinned by Christian values of love and trust, the school is in a good position to continue to develop and strengthen its Christian character.