



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Beer Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mare Lane
Beer, Seaton
Devon
EX12 3NB

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Date of inspection: 10 June 2014

Date of last inspection: 21 October 2008

School's unique reference number: 113424

Headteacher: Martin O'Mahony

Inspector's name and number: Andrew Rickett 201

School context

Beer is a smaller than average size rural primary school with 108 children on roll. They are currently arranged in to four class groups. A third of children attend from outside the catchment area. The majority of children are of white British heritage. A small number have English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average as is the number entitled to receive the pupil premium. The school federated with a voluntary aided primary school in October 2013 and has one governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Beer as a Church of England school are outstanding

- A strong emphasis on explicit Christian values makes a significant contribution to the children's well-being and spiritual development.
- Children explore matters of faith and belief with openness and confidence.
- The commitment of the headteacher, fully supported by school leaders, including governors, to the development of the impact of the Christian character ensures that the school is continually making progress as a church school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that a shared understanding of spirituality is used to identify opportunities to develop children's spiritual awareness across all areas of the curriculum.
- Develop the impact of values in collective worship by exploring them in greater depth so that they inform future worship themes.
- Ensure that an appropriate balance of knowledge, and learning from this knowledge, in religious education (RE) allows children to deepen their understanding of concepts.

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

The Christian character of the school is lived out in an exciting and joyous way by both children and adults. The five core values of love, peace, truth, respect and patience are explicitly understood to have roots in Christian teaching and are seen by children and adults as the values that underpin their relationships with each other. Parents and governors share this view and say that the values help children to understand how to live their lives more fully. These core values are increasingly becoming integral to the whole curriculum. They are used to enhance learning where appropriate and contribute to the above average attainment of children in the core subjects. The school has worked diligently to improve their understanding of what spirituality means. They have explored a number of approaches and are in now in the position to be able to take this forward by putting the development of each child's personal spirituality at the heart of the curriculum. Children already have the openness to express their spirituality in terms of faith or what it means to them personally with confidence and real enjoyment. For example, the children spoken to expressed profoundly their views on the nature of forgiveness and the need to forgive wholeheartedly as an expression of God's love for everyone. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent and characterised by mutual respect between adults and children and the need to look after those less fortunate than them. This is reflected in the efforts made by the school for children to understand the multi-cultural diversity of modern Britain.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Acts of worship are vibrant and exciting times in the school day during which children have opportunities to explore the school's core values through Bible stories and links with Christian festivals. Children have a very clear understanding of the difference between worship and assembly. They say that collective worship is an important aspect of the way that the school expresses its Christian ethos and is a time to connect with God. Children respond with great animation when asked challenging questions in worship. They relish the opportunity to explore concepts such as 'which of the core values is the trickiest to achieve?' The worship programme does not currently provide sufficient opportunities for the children's responses to these questions to be followed up thereby deepening their understanding. Worship themes are based on explicit teachings from the Bible which are then related to the children's own lives. Children are able to explain that these stories are important because Jesus told us how we should live our lives. Children are developing a very mature understanding of the nature of the Trinity. They share their thoughts on what it means to them and can do so in considerable depth. Prayer plays a central role in the worship life of the school both in collective worship and through the opportunities to pray in the classroom. Children have a mature appreciation of the purpose of prayer and articulate sensitively how it can help a person in times of need. The school has good systems to monitor the impact of acts of worship through regular visits from governors and feedback from groups of children which are used to inform improvements.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Children make good progress in religious education (RE) and by the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is above national expectations for most children. Standards are comparable with other core subjects and children achieve well at higher levels. Assessment of RE has improved since the previous inspection. Children's work is regularly assessed at the end of each module in both their knowledge and ability to apply what they have learnt. Teachers have improved their confidence and accuracy to assess children's progress in all aspects of RE. The recent introduction of a comprehensive tracking system is allowing teachers to more robustly identify progress over a period of time for different groups of children. This is still in the process of being developed. The use of 'learning journeys' to record the development of children's understanding as they explore a module helps to provide evidence of progress. At the moment children make some contribution to how these journeys are compiled but could have further involvement. The quality of teaching is good with

strengths in the level of questioning by teachers that challenge children's perceptions and understanding. For example, in one lesson observed, children were encouraged to explore their understanding of prayer through carefully phrased questions which helped children to develop their appreciation of how prayer can be used. In another lesson, the teacher supported children through the questions asked to make links between Pentecost and the Nativity. Children respond very enthusiastically to these challenges and have positive attitudes towards the subject. The school needs to ensure that teachers provide opportunities for children to explore in greater depth their response to their learning as their understanding grows. The RE coordinator is passionate and committed to her subject and ensures that it has a high profile in the overall curriculum. She has accurately identified what needs to be done to take RE forward. Religious education makes an important contribution to the Christian ethos through its links with the promotion of the core values.

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

The headteacher's commitment and excellent understanding of church school distinctiveness means that the school has made very good progress since the previous inspection in developing a Christian ethos that has meaning and purpose for all members of the school community. Leaders and managers articulate this ethos with a simple clarity that allows them to accurately identify the actions needed to continue to improve. The establishment of an ethos committee, which includes members of both school and church community, enables developments in church school distinctiveness to have a high profile the impact of which are monitored through governor meetings. The school has very close links with the parish church. The vicar and members of the church community are well known in the school and make an important contribution to collective worship. The school has also benefitted from support from the diocese particularly in establishing a joint ethos and vision with the other school in the federation. The creation of the federation has enabled both schools to look more closely at what it means to be a church school and this has strengthened both of them. Parents agree that the school has established a vision that they can fully support and which allows their children to explore faith and belief in a safe and secure environment. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education.

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