

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Budeaux Foundation Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Priestley Avenue
St Budeaux
Plymouth
PL5 2DW

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Plymouth
Dates of inspection: 23rd May 2012
Date of last inspection: 3rd March 2009
School's unique reference number: 113483
Headteacher: Mr Robin Jones
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jackie Rudman 601

School context

St Budeaux Church of England Foundation Junior School is a smaller than average-sized junior school on the perimeter of the City of Plymouth. There are an above average number of children eligible for free school meals. The number of children with special educational needs is average. There is an on-site breakfast club managed by the governing body. The school received a national award for 'Excellence in Financial Education' in 2011.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Budeaux Foundation as a Church of England school are good

St Budeaux Foundation is a good school because it has an ethos based on Christian values which are understood by all members of the school community and promoted by its leaders. Relationships are excellent giving children confidence to articulate their own developing understanding of life issues. Together with the local church it offers good pastoral support to families and is a strong Christian presence in the community.

Established strengths

- Christian values which underpin the school and can be clearly seen in every aspect of its life
- The way that children articulate their growing understanding of the Christian faith
- Excellent and supportive relationships between and among adults and children
- Strong links between the church and school

Focus for development

- Strengthen the systems of monitoring and assessing Religious Education (RE)
- Actively promote and proclaim the Christian foundation of the school throughout its physical environment
- Develop opportunities for quiet reflection within each classroom and the public areas of the school

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

St Budeaux is a happy school where children thrive and gain personal and spiritual confidence. Whilst the school has an implicit understanding of Christian distinctiveness of long standing, the specific Christian values of love, joy, respect and forgiveness are currently being explored in more depth by the school. This whole-school community initiative has made a good impact on affirming the school's Christian character giving all its members opportunities to develop a more coherent Christian vocabulary. Developing a sense of self-worth is a priority within the school as a tool to build up confidence. This confidence is apparent when the children talk about the Christian foundation of the school. They say that

being a church school makes a difference and talking about God helps them explore their own feelings. Within the school there is strong appreciation of the relationship nature of the Christian faith. Therefore staff have a focus on supporting individual children in their journey of faith. This has been particularly important during times of bereavement or difficulty as children come to staff for help in expressing their emotions. The loving and caring response that staff have offered is valued by the children and offers a positive example of living within the family of God. Children say they feel that school is like a loving family. The school has its own chapel which until recently has been used as a storage area. It has now been partially cleared and used for Christian reflection and by the peer mediators when they need a quiet space. School is aware that more use could be made of this room as a quiet space in which children's developing spirituality could be further nurtured. This is a school deeply rooted in its community and one which understands the opportunities to support families. For this reason it has developed many initiatives such as financial advice and support, savings schemes, Christian meditation and Christian clubs all of which combine to deepen and enhance the spiritual impact of the school on its community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is an important part of the school day. All staff and children attend and all gain spiritual refreshment and nurture. This is because music, prayer, teaching and reflection are skilfully interwoven to create a special time with God. The music in particular makes an outstanding impact on worship and children sing with obvious enjoyment adding harmonies to the melody to create joyful depth. Dramatic story-telling engages children's interest and they are all eager to take a leading role in the acting. In this way children are drawn into Bible stories and experience an empathy with a range of human emotions in relation to God's love. Christian understanding is further developed by the way children are encouraged to engage in prayer. In each class there are paper leaves on which they can write out their own prayers. These are then put onto the prayer tree in the hall and anonymously used by the worship leaders. Channelling these private prayers into public worship effectively enables children to share in the thoughts and feelings of others, contributing to the overall atmosphere of shared understanding and empathy. Through worship prayer has become important to the lives of children outside school. They say they talk to God when they are alone and thank Him when they feel particularly joyful. Consequently children begin to develop a relationship with God which is personal and relevant to their own lives. During times of worship children learn that Christian love is about caring for others. Therefore they are enthusiastic to support such schemes as Love in a Box and many other charitable causes. Planning for worship is consistent using the churches year and follows a set weekly pattern of leadership with staff, local clergy and other visitors. There are strong church links with several city churches through which children are given the opportunity to experience a range of Anglican styles of worship. A monthly service is held in the school hall. This serves as an introduction to church services and is very well attended by parents and children. Regular monitoring of worship has recently been introduced, and this will in time provide valuable data to evaluate its long term impact but this has yet to fully embed.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The new RE coordinator has achieved much in a short space of time. Her enthusiasm and clear vision has raised the status of RE in the curriculum and events such as the RE week with children creating their own modroc and palm crosses have had a good impact on the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Planning in Religious Education (RE) follows the Exeter diocese scheme of work. There is an equal focus on both AT1, learning about religion and AT2, learning from religion. Teacher knowledge is good and lessons are lively and well paced enhanced with creative use of drama, music and lively discussion. The use of technology is very well integrated into lessons and good use is made of a variety of research methods. An example of this was a year 5 lesson, based on what it means to be a Christian. This was part of a series of lessons looking at several world religions. Children worked confidently in small groups using a mixture of books and computers to research aspects of different religions. This approach was seen to make a good contribution to pupil's Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural development. In particular this is highly effective in promoting cultural understanding from a religious perspective. RE themes are also successfully used in cross-curricular lessons. In particular a year 3 class were actively engaged in learning the story of Moses and then using various elements of his life to create a playscript. Exciting story-telling coupled with clear and careful teacher explanations inspired the children to

enthusiastically engage with the work. The school has also a calendar of off-site visits to support RE. These include taking part in the Schools Week at a city church where volunteers explain the Christian faith using artefacts and architecture within the church. However, assessment in RE has only just begun and monitoring is not due to start until September 2012. Therefore the school has little documentary evidence to judge the standards of learning, either against national standards or against standards in other core subjects. Marking in RE is inconsistent throughout the school and not always based on learning objectives. Consequently children are not always aware of how they can improve their work or develop new ideas and staff have no consistent rationale for future planning. The co-ordinator has made this a priority in the development plan and is beginning to make an impact on staff response to children's work, but new systems and policies will take time to be embedded in the fabric of the school. Children are enthusiastic about their learning in RE. They say that teachers make the lessons interesting and finding out about God is exciting.

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

The headteacher leads through gentle encouragement. His clear Christian vision and quiet sense of humour permeates throughout the school making it a happy place for children and adults. Under his effective leadership the governors and staff have a strong collective and personal commitment to the school combined with a shared and clear understanding of what it means to be a church school. This is fostered and supported by the staff meeting at the beginning of each week to pray together for the school. However, this understanding is not currently articulated explicitly to the school community. Leaders have recognised this and currently there is a strong strategic emphasis on refocusing the ethos of the school on four Christian values of love, joy, respect and forgiveness. This has had a major impact on the Christian distinctiveness of the school with all the school community becoming more aware of its Christian foundation. Children talk confidently about the values of their school, pointing out to visitors the crosses in each classroom and the ongoing display surrounding them. School is aware that the visual impact of these displays is sometimes rather dissipated by other high quality displays in the classroom. They are beginning to consider how to be more proactive in using the whole environment to provide clearer visual evidence of an inner spirituality. Regular governor visits are linked to the school development plan. There is a system of routine and reported visit. The reported visits have a clear focus and are related to specific curriculum or policy responsibility. Consequently governors are enabled to make informed strategic decisions based on accurate information and self-evaluation. Links between the school and the church are strong. The vicar takes a proactive role by leading a regular time of prayer and quiet reflection at the beginning of governor meetings. This brings a spiritual dimension to strategic management ensuring that decisions and policies are based on Christian principles. Foundation governors are active in promoting links between school and church, encouraging good community relationships. Enterprises such as the Bible based after-school club and the yearly family fun day are instrumental in strengthening these church links by drawing the whole community together under a common aim.

SIAS report May 2012 St Budeaux Foundation Junior School Plymouth, PL5 2DW