



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St Georges Voluntary Aided Church Primary School**

Pastures Avenue  
St Georges  
Weston- Super- Mare  
BS22 7SA

**Diocese: Bath and Wells**

Local Authority:	North Somerset
<b>Date of inspection:</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> February 2011</b>
Date of last inspection:	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2008
School's URN:	134830
Name of Headteacher:	Sandra Medley
Inspector's name and number:	Daphne Spitzer NS 37

### **School context**

St Georges Church School was opened in 2006. It serves a new housing estate built on the outskirts of Weston Super Mare, close to the M5 motorway. There are 209 children on roll together with 52 nursery places. The majority of children are from white British heritage backgrounds and the numbers of children with special educational needs and /or disabilities are above the national average. The accommodation is of the highest quality and grounds are spacious and attractive. There is no denominational church in the parish linked to this church school.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Georges VA Church Primary school as a church school are outstanding**

St Georges is a community that unashamedly proclaims the roots of its ethos in Christian teaching and the love of God. This makes a profound difference to the life of the school and creates an environment where children are valued as individuals and whose talents are given every opportunity to flourish

### **Established strengths**

- Children's opinions are heard and valued, creating a happy, caring and reflective environment
- The headteacher and governors have a real passion for and commitment to the development of the school's distinctive Christian character
- Collective Worship has a key role in promoting the high level of spiritual development

### **Focus for development**

- Provide opportunities for children to be involved in planning for worship and lead it on a regular basis
- Develop a programme of visits and visitors for religious education to further embed understanding of the diverse faiths and cultures of people living in this country

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

St Georges Church Primary School is a warm and caring Christian community. It's inclusive and friendly ethos ensure that all children make good progress academically, socially and in their personal development. Christ's teaching to love God and love one another is a tangible feature of daily life. It is evident in the way children spontaneously wish to help those in trouble in their school community. For instance, when a family was recently involved in a house fire, children decided to bring in toys and when a parent was in hospital with cancer they raised money for the ward in an event called "Maisie's Marvellous Mile." God's love for the school community is also reflected in a child's comment to his parent "God loves me doesn't He?" Another child commenting about collective worship said "we are sending our prayers to God and letting Him know we love Him." The spiritual development of the children is excellent and is fully embedded in the daily life of the school. For instance, prayers are said at the end of each morning and at the start of school council meetings. Children particularly appreciate the school's "quiet area" where they understand the Christian value of peace. In this easily accessible place children know that pebbles can be chosen to signify a prayer given to God and its reflective atmosphere will calm and soothe any troubles. Children relate extremely well to each other and understand when others might have difficulties in their lives and the need to help. Their strong sense of responsibility is reflected in the way they raise funds for others beyond the school community such as the homeless in Weston and the Send a Cow charity in Africa. Children's views are highly valued. They have a strong voice in school, frequently heard through the eco council or school council and members of these groups are highly respected and admired. During a recent act of collective worship seven core Christian values for the school were proposed and selected by the whole school. Children understand that the next step in the process is to discuss and agree this decision at the next school council meeting before widening the consultation further. Spiritual development is highly effectively enhanced by the school environment. Christian signs and symbols adorn the whole of the interior of the building. For instance they are reflected in the prayer corners in classrooms, the central quiet area and the displays in the hall. They are also reflected in the symbolism of the local quilters' colourful works of art, which include the worship table cloth and stained glass door combining children's ideas of God's creation. The attractive peaceful environment creates a strong sense of Christian community. Children are very proud of this school.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Whole school collective worship is central to the daily life of this church school. It is important to the school community because it brings everyone together to worship God and demonstrate their care for each other as a school family. Children enjoy this time of the day because they know the activities will be engaging, meaningful and relevant. This was evident in the way all children recreated the sounds of the storm in the story of Elijah during the act of worship observed. Worship is totally inclusive and all views and responses are valued and welcomed. Children, from the youngest to the oldest regularly volunteer to lead prayers. Worship contributes significantly to spiritual development. For instance, during the act of worship observed, children were asked to pause and listen to the silence. One child subsequently commented that said she had heard God in the quiet around her. Worship at St Georges reflects the local ecumenical practice highly effectively. At the start, a candle is lit to signify the light of Christ and opening liturgical responses are said. Prayers are said spontaneously as well as read on occasions. A time of reflection, often enhanced by contemplative music also enhances the high quality of spirituality. Collective worship is coordinated very effectively by the deputy headteacher who plans the themes using the church calendar and school's broad Christian vision. Staff and clergy are also involved in the planning though not as yet any children. They are, however fully involved in the monitoring and evaluation process and know that issues they raise will be addressed. The clergy from the Local Ecumenical Partnership regularly visit to lead worship. The Baptist minister in particular is well known in school and his "hands on" approach to worship is immensely enjoyed by the children. The Christian festivals of Harvest, Christmas and Easter are celebrated in school with the clergy leading and parents present and are very special occasions in the life of the school.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Religious Education is very well led by the deputy headteacher. He is a subject specialist and his expertise is highly valued by the staff and governors. Standards in RE are good, similar to those of the other core subjects. Children make good progress in their learning throughout the key stages because teaching strategies are innovative, varied and very well matched to the individual needs of all children. Lessons are interesting and consequently children enjoy RE and find it relevant to their lives. In one lesson observed on Islam, children were learning about the key features of a mosque. Responses to skilful questioning by the teacher, demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding as well as reflective, sensitive, thinking. RE contributes very effectively to spiritual development as observed in a key stage one class. Using the story of Jonah and the Whale children were learning about the Christian value of forgiveness. Collaborative group work and role play was very effectively used. Children demonstrated good understanding as evidenced by a child's remark that when you forgave someone you felt "relieved" and "warm inside." Teachers regularly assess children's learning using assessment data very well to inform future planning. The subject leader

regularly monitors lessons and has a good overview of each child's progress and is continually seeking ways to improve standards. RE is an important subject at St Georges, regularly discussed during meetings with staff and governors. Recently the governors decided to raise the profile of RE further by increasing its frequency on the school's monitoring and evaluation cycle. The subject holds an important position, often at the core of the school's creative curriculum. However, staff are aware that first hand experiences, such as visits are, as yet, not always possible for other faiths, in the way they are for Christianity.

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

The high quality of the leadership of the headteacher is inspirational. Over the last few years, she has built on the school's founding Christian vision conceived by the diocese and Local Ecumenical Partnership. Together with her deputy and clergy team she has developed this original one into a uniquely distinctive Christian vision which is continually evolving and responsive to the school community's needs. This strong Christian vision is fully supported by the governing body, staff and parents. The school's Christian ethos with its clear message of God's love, is highly valued by parents who believe it makes a real difference to their children's personal development. Parents appreciate the peaceful nature of the school's environment and its calming effect on all present. They particularly value the way that staff welcome them into their classrooms and show special care towards them as well as their children. Parents feel highly involved in the school's annual self evaluation and development because their views are regularly surveyed and invited in newsletters. A recent outcome which is being addressed is the parents' desire to join the children for worship in the school hall on a more regular basis, not just for the major Christian festivals. It is planned that members of the local community will also be invited to join the school on these occasions ensuring the school becomes a focal point for the locality. The newly completed and recently dedicated Oasis Room, with its beautiful stained glass door, is to be used as a community resource. This has developed from the school leadership's vision to fill the vacuum left by the lack of a linked church, to this church school. The local Baptist minister, as chair of governors, takes a lead in ensuring a strong church presence in school. The school's evolving vision to "be church" is viewed in terms of an exciting as well as challenging pioneering journey. The links with the diocese are very strong and of mutual benefit. Professional development for staff and governors is frequently taken and the school hosts aspiring Deputy Headteachers who are undergoing training as potential heads of church schools. The school is also developing mutually beneficial links with a school in Uganda. St Georges church school is to be congratulated on the way it's distinctive Christian character has been strengthened since its last inspection.