



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St Marychurch Church of England Primary and Nursery School**

Hartop Road  
Torquay  
TQ1 4QH

#### **Diocese: Exeter**

Local authority: Torbay  
Dates of inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011  
Date of last inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
School's unique reference number: 113473  
Headteacher: Mr Philip Mantell  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Jackie Rudman 601

#### **School context**

St Marychurch Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary and Nursery School is a larger than average primary school. Within its catchment there are some areas of social deprivation. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There is a larger than average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disability. There is a breakfast club managed by the governors and a privately run after-school club on site which shares some of the school facilities. The school holds several awards including Artsmark Bronze and Healthy Schools Plus.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Marychurch Voluntary Aided Primary and Nursery School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Strong Christian leadership from the headteacher and governors have ensured that distinctive Christian values of love, joy, peace and kindness are applied to all strategic decisions and permeate all aspects of the school. Consistent and thorough systems of monitoring and evaluation involve all members of the school and ensure that the core values are recognised and understood by all its members. Therefore a strong Christian community has developed in which children gain self-confidence to articulate their thinking and are nurtured and supported in their growing understanding of belonging to the family of God.

#### **Established strengths**

- Strong collaborative leadership and management focussed on applying Christian principles to all strategic decisions
- Excellent procedures for monitoring and evaluating the Christian impact of the school
- Confident children who are enthusiastic about their school community and who enjoy their learning

#### **Focus for development**

- Extend the opportunities for children's experience in worship by increasing the range and scope of its music
- Extend the formal opportunities given to children to evaluate worship

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

Within the last 3 years the school has strengthened its understanding of its core Christian values. The whole school community has been involved in identifying these values as love, joy, peace and kindness. This self-evaluation has impacted on all areas of school life and is an integral element in the strengthening and re-affirmation of the school's Christian character. The headteacher defined this new understanding of the school's mission as a God-given duty to reflect God's love in its broadest sense. Subsequently the school has worked hard to embed these Christian principles in all relationships and decisions. A cross curricular project involving the children in making giant banners to proclaim the core values now forms part of the hall display and are an excellent and clear reminder to all the school community of the values upon which it operates. Each child is treated as unique and distinctive and given the same respect and value. Consequently all children thrive in this atmosphere and gain in self confidence and assurance. Children develop a respect for others and an appreciation that the world belongs to God and humans have a duty to care for it. This was vividly illustrated by responses from KS2 children in RE to fund-raising for Christian Aid. Because of past lessons they knew exactly where to find the teaching of Jesus in the Bible. They found the correct passage of scripture and used it to illustrate their growing understanding of Christian responses to local, national and international issues. The success of the mission of the school is seen in the outstanding way parents support school events and occasions such as the Family Learning Project, and the competition to illustrate the 4 core Christian values. Children know and understand that Christian values underpin the ethos of the school. They speak confidently about love, peace, joy, and kindness, agreeing that it is sometimes hard to keep these values. They say they have to treat everyone like God's people. The school has established many excellent practices and procedures that encourage spiritual development. One of these is the prayer cycle which is used daily to pray for items or people of the children's choice. This is greatly valued by parents who appreciate that the school is nourishing and supporting their children to develop a spiritual life based on the teaching of Jesus.

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

Worship holds a central role in developing the school's Christian character. Acts of worship are fully integrated into the life of the school. Throughout the school day, in formal and informal settings, reference is made to worship themes. This means that children gain an excellent understanding of Christian ethics governing thinking, behaviour, actions and reactions. This is further reinforced by lessons connecting spirituality and thinking skills. Children, parents, staff and governors all speak of worship as a spiritual experience which guides and directs their life. The majority of children say they enjoy worship, although some would prefer the weekly mass held in church to be shorter. Children say they feel affirmed by going to the front of the church and feeling the sense of belonging to the family of God. They say that stories and teaching in worship help them to treat everyone like God's people. Children from all backgrounds gain spiritual nurture and understanding from worship. As one older child said, 'I am not a believer, but I respect everyone who has a faith.' Parents recognise that worship in school has developed from a Christian performance model of assembly to acts of worship defined by specific actions, such as lighting a candle, or liturgical introductions. Therefore they find spiritual support and help in worship. The active involvement of children in taking leading roles in acts of worship contributes to the very positive attitudes of the children. Children benefit from this participation which develops a greater sense of responsibility and an affirmation of their own worth. A designated time of consideration and silence within worship embeds Christian teaching and gives children a unique opportunity to experience reflection within the context of prayer. Children say that learning to pray at school helps them to pray when they are by themselves. Therefore they learn from a very early age that prayer is integral to a personal relationship with God. The importance of worship as a distinctive and important part of the school day is reflected through the regular attendance by staff. This offers an excellent role model to the children and gives staff the opportunity to relate to children across the school. It creates an environment of security for the children within the welcoming family atmosphere of the school. The school has correctly identified that to enhance worship further it needs to extend

the range of musical expression in worship. It is also aware of the need to give the children a greater voice in the regular evaluation of the impact of acts of worship.

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

Since the last inspection the school has had a strong emphasis on improving the standards within religious education. This has meant that the importance of RE has been raised to a parity with other core subject and is monitored and evaluated with rigour. The headteacher, as overall subject leader for RE together with the lead teacher for RE in KS1, assess standards regularly throughout the school. Because of this renewed focus, standards in RE have risen and are now in line with the other core subjects. The school's monitoring suggests that teaching and learning is good and in some lessons it is excellent. This was confirmed on the day of inspection where lessons observed were holistic and dynamic. For example in a KS1 lesson, by use of a large bag concealing a variety of items, the teacher fully engaged the children and skilfully enabled them to share their own experiences and knowledge of Christian symbols. Lessons are based on the Devon Locally Agreed Syllabus and follow a coherent pattern based on the Church's year as well as a variety of Christian themes. Staff are enthusiastic about their teaching and because children's interest is engaged on a variety of levels RE makes an outstanding impact on children's understanding of the Christian faith.

RE is not taught in isolation but has strong links with the wider curriculum. This was seen in a KS2 spirituality and thinking skills lesson where children were identifying ways in which they reacted to photographs. They were encouraged to use a variety of types of thinking skills to answer questions. Through skilful and sensitive teaching children were gently enabled to identify and articulate their thinking skills within a spiritual framework. Children say their teachers listen to their point of view, even if it is different to others in the class. Excellent relationships exist between children and teachers and as a result of these as well as excellent learning opportunities children develop into confident, informed and articulate young people.

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

Strong collaborative leadership from the headteacher and governors, school staff and parental groups have built on the legacy of the past to develop a loving Christian community which has high expectations of all its members. The headteacher has brought a new clarity of vision which has had an outstanding impact on the school community as well as its physical environment. Staff, parents and governors recognise that under his leadership the Christian character of the school has been reaffirmed and strengthened. He has encouraged staff to consider leadership in church schools and raised the standard of teaching and learning by giving staff outstanding opportunities to develop their own expertise.

The Ethos committee, established within the governor structure has ensured that its strategic decisions are based on core Christian principles of love, joy, peace and kindness. The school has developed robust and honest systems for self-evaluation and monitoring the Christian character of the school and Foundation governors play a full and substantive role in this process. The local church and in particular the clergy give outstanding support to the school, particularly in worship. This means that families are given opportunities to worship together at the weekly mass or when celebrating church festivals. Throughout all areas of school life there is a high degree of collective, strategic thought and planning which gives a cohesive structure to the community. Through formal and informal monitoring, questionnaires, forums and discussion everyone has a voice and is invited to make a contribution. All contributions are recognised and valued. Therefore the children benefit from committed and enthusiastic adult team who work as equal partners for the good of this outstanding church school community.