

St. Mark's Church of England / Methodist Primary School

St. Mark's Road
Worle
North Somerset
BS22 7PU

Diocese: Bath and Wells; Methodist District: Bristol

Local authority: North Somerset

Dates of inspection: 9th July, 2007

Date of last inspection: January 2002

School's unique reference number: 109273

Headteacher: Helen Bath

Inspector's name and number: Neville Norcross NS403

School context

The school is a larger than average primary situated on the outskirts of Weston Super Mare. It serves a mixed residential area. Almost all of the pupils are of white British origin. The school has a joint Methodist/Anglican foundation. It is linked with three ecumenical churches in the local area, who are responsible for appointing a majority of the school's governors.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Mark's as a Church of England/Methodist school are good

The school has a distinctive Christian character. The day to day life of the school is underpinned by Christian values. As a result of this the school makes a significant impact upon children's personal development and academic achievement. Some features of the school are outstanding.

Established strengths

- **The Christian vision of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors**
- **The quality of the relationships between all members of the school community**
- **The enthusiasm and expertise of the subject leader for religious education**
- **The level of co-operation between local churches as they promote the Christian identity of the school**

Focus for development

- **Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the newly-developed three year plan for the daily act of worship**
- **In religious education involve all members of teaching staff in the moderation of children's work in order to make them more aware of the standards which are being achieved**

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

The emphasis which the school places on meeting the needs of individuals ensures that all the children feel that they are valued and special. The learning mentor, for example, works very effectively with those children who are facing emotional challenges. This enables conflicts to be resolved in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. The children have made a significant contribution towards the selection of those values which now underpin the day-to-day life of the school. These are displayed in the entrance hall under the heading, "At St. Mark's We Value" and are clearly articulated by the children. The prominence of these Christian values enables children to display high levels of self esteem. Children support each other very well and the older ones show a high degree of care for the younger ones.

There are school systems which positively encourage this interaction between the older and younger children. The school has very good provision to support the children's spiritual development. The interactive display, based on footprints, gives children an opportunity to write their own prayers and the holding cross in the entrance also encourages personal prayer. The children have a strong sense of right and wrong. They understand the need for school rules and appreciate the way in which their achievements are celebrated. The work on non-Christian faiths together with the wide variety of visitors and other activities helps children to have a good appreciation of cultures which are different to their own. The entrance hall and corridor displays make it very clear that this is a Christian school. In particular they demonstrate the emphasis which is placed upon the school's prayer life and times of reflection. There is less emphasis on this in the classrooms. However, in most classrooms there are displays which show examples of the children's work in religious education. The relationships between all members of the school community are very good and the sense of teamwork creates a firm foundation upon which school development can be built.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school describes worship as a central feature of school life and there is good evidence to support this view. The worship is distinctively Christian and supports the Anglican/Methodist foundation of the school. Acts of worship are well planned. A new 3 year plan has been developed and, when introduced in September, will provide a balanced range of themes which takes account of major events in the church calendar. Careful preparation of each act of worship helps to create a stimulating yet reverent atmosphere which contributes towards the children's spiritual development. The focus table with a candle, Bible and religious artefacts also contributes to the children's spiritual development as does the use of sign language to support the words of songs and prayers. The children enter the school hall in a spirit of reverence and expectation. They listen very attentively and sing with enthusiasm. The children express positive views of daily worship. They enjoy the variety of visitors who lead the worship. They also say that they would like to sing a wider range of songs and have more opportunities to be involved in the planning and leading of the worship. Most members of staff are present on most days and this involvement sends an important message to the children about the value which is placed on worship in the life of the school. The children can recite the Lord's prayer together with other prayers and greetings from the Anglican and Methodist traditions. However, prayers are not used before lunch or at the end of the school day. The relationship with the three local ecumenical churches as well as a Baptist Church is very good. The clergy lead worship on a regular basis and support the teaching of religious education. The clergy also visit school regularly on an informal basis in order to offer pastoral support to staff and families. Children from school are invited to the Church Holiday Club and other special events. School issues are included as part of the church prayer times. Only limited use is made of St. Mark's church because it is used by a community group during each school day.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The standards achieved by the children are good. This is because the teaching is good and the staff are supported by an outstanding subject leader. She has undertaken a wide range of professional development and uses this to good effect. The subject is well planned using the Local Authority Agreed Syllabus which has been supplemented with additional units recommended by the Diocese. Religious Education is supported by a good range of resources which provide interest and stimulation for the children. The children make good progress as they move through school. The subject leader has implemented an outstanding system for the assessment of religious education and all members of staff have been made aware of nationally expected standards. She has a very good understanding of the strengths of the subject and the areas to be developed. She has rightly acknowledged the need to involve all staff in the moderation of children's work in order to make them more aware of the standards which are being achieved. There is an awareness of the need to provide a balance of activities when setting tasks for the children. In the children's books there is evidence of tasks which challenge their thinking but a greater emphasis on "learning from religion", attainment target 2, will enhance standards of attainment. The children have positive views

about religious education. They have a good understanding of the Christian faith as well as other world faiths such as Islam and Judaism. The strong links with the local church enable the children to see the Christian faith in practice. They particularly enjoy those activities which make them think about challenging issues. As one boy said, " I like it when you have to think hard and the answer is in your heart but not in your head."

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and school governors have a very clear Christian vision for the school. This vision is made evident in documentation and within the school environment. All members of staff are involved in training sessions and discussions which relate to the school's Christian foundation. The foundation governors achieve a good balance of support and challenge in promoting the school's Christian foundation. The clergy and members of the church provide a high level of pastoral and practical support for the headteacher as she works to promote the Christian vision. The school has recently completed a thorough self-evaluation of its distinctiveness and effectiveness. In addition to this, parents, staff, children and governors are regularly invited to give their views of the school through the questionnaires which are used. These questionnaires often refer to church school aspects. The results are taken seriously and acted upon positively. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and of those things which need to be done to build upon those strengths. The school community has benefited from professional development provided by the Diocese and North Somerset religious education advisory service. The governors seek to appoint staff who are fully committed to the distinctive Christian ethos of the school. Parents have a good understanding of the school's distinctiveness as a church school and appreciate the benefits which this brings for their children.