



Diocese of Bath & Wells

Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Report on

Monteclefe Church of England Academy



Monteclefe Church of England Academy

School Lane
Kirkham Street
Somerton
TA11 7NL

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset
Dates of inspection: 27 March 2013
Date of last inspection: 6 March 2008
School's unique reference number: 123838
Headteacher: David Norton
Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Bartlett NS 120

School context

Monteclefe Church of England Academy is situated at the heart of the small market town of Somerton and mainly serves its local community. There are currently 153 pupils on roll. The original Victorian school building has been refurbished and extended over years and now includes both original features such as the Bible text over the main entrance and more recent developments including a well planned environmental area, much appreciated by the children. There is a good balance of established and newer staff.

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

The school's Christian values are exemplified in its daily life and well communicated to the wider community. There are very good connections with the local church. The school contributes richly to its local community, which in turn is very supportive. Pupils' needs are well met and they make good progress.

Established strengths

- The headteacher's creative Christian vision for the school, which is well supported by the governors, and inspires both the staff and pupils
- The close links between the local church and the school which include, currently, shared use of the school building for Sunday services
- The confidence, happiness and progress of the children

Focus for development

- Further enrich pupils' experience of religious education through visits and visitors
- Develop evaluation and planning for collective worship
- Offer training opportunities in leading collective worship for all school worship leaders

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

The school's Christian values shine out in its daily life and each child is seen as unique. They are reflected also in the school's participation in the Olympic legacy 'Be the best you can' and in the imaginative approach to teaching and learning. The school's high expectations for every pupil are seen in the way the headteacher and staff inspire the children's curiosity, encouraging them to take risks in learning and to aim for their best in all areas. The school's approach to homework has been very well developed in recent years to encourage parents and pupils to work together, with some very creative outcomes. Pupils are clear about their learning targets, as seen in a PE lesson where they recorded their individual achievement after each activity. They learn that working hard and practice lead to success. New challenges are regularly set for the children, for example in the street surfing after school club

through which their balance and confidence have been considerably extended. Very good opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are evident both within and beyond the curriculum. These have included wonder at the arrival of a new baby, hatching eggs from the bantam hens, and appreciating the beauty of the winter snow. Whole school celebrations of a very high quality have involved all the pupils as well as many members of the local community, for example the Royal Wedding. Through these experiences the children have grown in confidence and gained a fuller understanding of historic events. Links with the local community have also been considerably strengthened. Drama and music have a high profile in the school, giving all pupils the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and be involved in performance. Pupils have also benefited from witnessing the passing of the Olympic torch and attending a Jubilee Fayre, where they saw the Queen. These experiences have been used to stimulate creative writing. During advent each year a creative whole school focus is given to Christmas, which includes many traditional preparations for the festival. One child commented: 'It's fun because we make the Christmas decorations'. The children also have good opportunities for stillness and reflection in the quiet areas in each classroom. Their moral and social skills are very well developed, as seen in the words of a pupil: 'If we do something wrong we feel bad'. When asked about how they could make reparation, another said: 'We could make them a buddy bracelet or shake their hand'. The school council is well run and pupils take pride in the impact of their discussions. These have included much appreciated outdoor equipment and a climbing wall in the playground.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Pupils respond positively to collective worship and they are taking an increasingly active role. During the inspection, a good number of children from most classes were involved in the Easter service, which was well attended by parents. Pupils' involvement also includes Year 6 keeping a detailed weekly log of the main act of worship. The children show an understanding of prayer, saying that people 'Talk to God to thank Him or if you are finding something difficult'. They can speak about their personal experience of prayer. There are a good variety of worship leaders. Pupils enjoy the vicar's weekly contribution and comment that it is also 'fun' when the headteacher leads worship. The school is aware that training for all leaders will further enrich pupils' experience of school worship. The local church is very welcoming and school worship is held there on special occasions. School worship has also been held outdoors, with a Pets' Service, much appreciated by the children. A good start has been made to monitoring and evaluating collective worship, with the involvement of the governors. This now needs to be further developed, with clear links drawn between evaluation and planning.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Teaching in Religious Education (RE) is good overall and includes some imaginative planning and preparation. This was exemplified in a lesson observed in which pupils were invited to consider ways to celebrate Easter, inspired by the Archbishop of York's suggestions. Pupils were encouraged to think of ideas which reflected a Christian message, and good use was made of individual laptops. Their creative responses included: 'You could go on a walk up a hill carrying a palm cross and think how lucky you are not to be carrying a wooden cross'. In another lesson, following a very good recall of the main story, pupils were invited to empathise with the feelings of those people involved in the changing events of Holy Week. In both lessons observed, the pace was good and a good variety of learning styles were used. Teaching of Christianity is good, with some examples of outstanding practice. A recent project on cathedrals enabled pupils to learn about and appreciate the great variety of cathedrals across the land as well as to experience a much enjoyed visit to Wells Cathedral after which one child commented: 'It was the best day of my life'. An excerpt from a pupil's poem written after the visit included: 'Beneath the magnificent nave I stood, Beyond its walls the Jesse window shines'. Good examples of pupils' artwork in RE include a remarkable drawing inspired by St Basil's cathedral. Teaching of other world faiths is less richly developed. This is mainly because pupils have had less experience of meeting members of other faith communities and of visiting their places of worship.

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

The headteacher's outstanding vision has the children at its heart and fully reflects the school's Christian values. It demonstrates and inspires both an appreciation of life and a love of learning, and is fully endorsed by the governors. As part of the school's conversion process to its new status, and with good support from the diocese, the whole school community, led by the senior leadership and governors, has been involved in a review of the school's Christian vision and values. These are now very well communicated as seen in the way the Christian ethos is explained to all new parents. Parents value the school's links with the church. A school banner with a modern version of the proverb over the school's original front entrance reads: 'Train children to click on what's right when they're young: they'll be downloading it for life!' illustrating both pupils' recognition of the school's Church foundation and its relevance to their lives. Staff feel valued and there are very good opportunities in place for professional development, based on an appreciation of the strengths and contribution that each staff member makes. Whilst ensuring that a good, balanced curriculum is maintained, staff are encouraged to challenge themselves to reach their own goals, and it is clear that the children benefit from their teachers' motivation. Every year the school curriculum is reviewed and developed to meet the needs of the pupils. There are very good, and growing, links with the local church. This can be seen in the church's generous gift of a Bible to all pupils. It is also reflected in the school's active involvement with church events such as the flower festival, the 800 year celebration, and in the number of church members who regularly volunteer in school. Links with parents and the broader local community are also strong, based on a rich variety of connections. Because of the close links with the infant school, the transition for the children is smooth. Pupils benefit from the school's good liaison with the secondary schools to which they transfer. Good links with the Community Learning Partnership schools ensures that pupils benefit from a good variety of shared events. The school's involvement in the Great Crane project on the Somerset Levels and Moors has been much enjoyed by staff and pupils alike. The school was last inspected in 2008 and has addressed both areas identified at that time for development.

SIAS report March 2013 Monteclefe Church of England Academy, Somerton, TA11 7NL