

Southrop Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Southrop
Lechlade
Gloucestershire
GL7 3NU

Diocese of Gloucester

Local authority: Gloucestershire
Dates of inspection: 29th November 2012
Date of last inspection: 27th February 2008
School's unique reference number: 115651
Headteacher: Mr Allan Brown
Inspector's name and number: Maria Wells, Rosemary Privett 321

School context

Southrop is a small, two class primary school, with 47 pupils, that serves the village of Southrop and surrounding villages. Most of the pupils are of white British heritage and none of them speak English as an additional language. The head teacher has been in post since April 2009 and prior to this was a teacher in the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Southrop VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The distinctive Christian character of Southrop Primary school is reflected in its caring, nurturing approach and Christian ethos. This is carefully underpinned by Christian values that are known and understood by all stakeholders. The lives of the school, church and community are closely intertwined and this has had a positive impact on the personal and spiritual development of the children.

Established strengths

- The head teacher and governors have a clear vision for the school as a church school serving its community.
- All adults strongly articulate how the school's Christian values are rooted in scripture and enrich the attitudes and behaviours of the school community.
- There is strong mutual support between the school and the local church and strong relationships with parents and the local community.

Focus for development

- Involve all stakeholders in a review of the Christian values in order to establish a core set agreed and owned by all.
- Support pupils' planning of the worship so that they are able to apply the key elements to the worship they lead.

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

Southrop is a welcoming, friendly church school with a family atmosphere. Its positive Christian ethos ensures that all children feel valued and special, enjoy school and are given many opportunities to achieve their best. Across the curriculum the school's Christian values encourage spiritual development. The teachers plan for opportunities to incorporate the school's values in to all aspects of learning. For example, the value of courage was related to

work in history on Grace Darling and Mary Seacole and pupils are able to relate this to the courage displayed by characters such as Daniel in the bible. Effective planning ensures that there are explicit opportunities for spiritual development during religious education [RE] lessons and opportunities for prayer and reflection during the school day. For example, during an RE lesson children were asked to focus on a candle in silence and 'try to feel inside the peace that a Christian might feel.' Christian values are also reflected in the way the inclusive culture allows all children to interact well with each other; as one child said, 'Because we're a small school, everybody knows everybody else and we all look after each other'. A 'buddy bench' in the playground, suggested by the children and donated by last year's school leavers, is used to ensure no one ever feels left out at playtimes. There are opportunities to celebrate pupil achievement, such as awards given out at the end of worship for a maths challenge; this fosters the 'family feel' of the school and helps to build confidence. The distinctive Christian character and links with the local church are valued by parents. One parent commented, 'We can't help but know what this term's value is and that's good because we can reinforce it at home.' Monthly school services held at the church are extremely well attended not only by pupils and parents but by church members and the wider community. Parents cited the recent Harvest festival followed by a community lunch as a good example of how the school is working with the church and local community. The vicar works closely with the school and is eager to ensure that the partnership between the school and church strengthens further. Although space is limited, the school has done much to develop areas for spiritual reflection with an area in the lobby and the wildlife garden. The reflection area in the lobby changes with each termly value and is interactive. This term children are invited to draw in sand something that reminds them of God's creativity. Photos of a past display showed examples of pupils writing prayers for peace on cut out hands. The wildlife garden is used by older pupils as a place to be quiet and feel close to God. One child said, 'The wildlife area is a good space to be, because it brings me close to God's creation.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of the daily life at Southrop Church of England Primary school. All members of staff are involved in leading worship and pupils also lead regularly. Key stage 2 children lead worship every Thursday and Key Stage 1 children lead it once each term. The school follows the 'Values for Life' scheme but also uses resources such as the BBC programme 'Something to think about.' The use of these resources as well as different leaders allows pupils to experience a variety of ways of worshipping. The headteacher says that leading worship supports his own and the teachers' spiritual development. The school uses diocesan resources such as Experience Easter and the vicar leads worship at major Christian festivals. This supports the pupils understanding of the pattern of the church year, as does the effective use of symbolism. For example, at the beginning of worship a lit candle is placed on a cloth the colour of which corresponds to the liturgical season. Children understand that this represents Jesus as the light of the world and gives them a good understanding of the church year. It is clear that pupils are developing a sound understanding the meaning and purpose of worship and of some of its central elements. One child said, 'It lets you connect with God, praise Him and ask for forgiveness.' However, apart from one child leading extemporary prayer during the worship observed, this knowledge and understanding is not clearly evident in the worship they lead. A recent visit from clergy from India has helped the children's understanding that the church is a world wide body. Prayer has a place of importance and spills out into the whole school day. Grace is said before lunch and each class ends the day with prayer. As commented by the chair of governors, this helps children to understand that, 'Worship goes on throughout the day not just first thing.' Children know that they can pray at anytime and use the special reflective spaces around school. The vicar reports that the children use these spaces during lunchtime saying, 'They are used to stilling themselves at different times of the day.' The vicar works closely with the school and feels that because the church family now attends the monthly school service held in church, school worship is speaking to the community. Each term, worship is discussed with pupils and evaluated by teachers. Children are asked about what aspects they enjoy and what they have learnt from the termly value The impact of worship on their daily lives is not formally evaluated.

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

The head teacher provides strong leadership in developing the Christian foundation of this small village school. He has clear Christian vision and sees his leadership as a calling rather than a job and believes that a Christian ethos runs through everything the school does. He, along with other adults, can articulate the way that Christian values impact on the lives of the whole school community. The school has adopted the diocesan 18 'Values for Life'. The headteacher and governors have correctly identified the need to review this in order to establish a core set of values agreed and owned by all stakeholders. Governors are regular visitors to the school and as part of their visits invariably observe acts of worship. The vicar also regularly observes RE lessons. They record their visits in terms of provision but as yet these findings are not robustly evaluated to inform the future development and planning of worship. Foundation governors make a valuable contribution to the school's distinctive Christian character. The vicar works closely with the head teacher and this mutual support is a strength. They regularly pray together about school issues. The links with the local church are already strong but there is a desire to take the partnership further. The chair of governors said that governors want the children to know that the church is theirs. The head teacher gives an annual report to the parochial church council (PCC) and there is currently a Scripture Union school's worker intern working at the church. He leads a lunchtime bible study club at the school which is enjoyed and well attended by children. This has helped pupils to understand how Christians live out their faith in daily life. The headteacher is fully aware that in a small school, distribution of leadership is a challenge. He has recently taken over as RE coordinator and worship coordinator. He is aware of the professional developments needs regarding the leadership of RE and has taken steps to address this. Governors are aware of the importance of planning for the future. To this end they are convening a joint ethos committee with another local church school and are exploring options to ensure that a church school can be sustained in the village.

SIAS report, November 2012, Southrop Church of England VC Primary School, GL7 3NU.