

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Payhembury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Payhembury,

Honiton

EX14 3HT

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Date of inspection: 30th March 2010

Date of last inspection: 2nd April 2007

School's unique reference number: 113360

Headteacher: Penny Carvill

Inspector's name and number: Carole McCormack (224)

School context

This small school is situated within walking distance of the church at the heart of the village. It operates on a split site, KS1 being adjacent to the newly built village hall (where the privately run pre-school meet) and KS2 on the opposite side of the road in the original school building. All children are of white British heritage and this part of Devon is remote from a diversity of cultural traditions.

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

The exemplary work to develop shared core Christian values across school, church and community has impacted upon the development of the children as confident and independent learners. The powerful partnership between the headteacher and parish priest, who is also chair of governors, gives enormous vitality to both school and church; and this energy has driven the extraordinary pace of improvement in the school as a distinctive and effective church school.

Established strengths

- Strong relationships between school, church and community which ensure that the core Christian values, corporately identified by these partners, can live and thrive in the lives of the children;
- Remarkably autonomous, reflective and analytical learners, closely in touch with the Christian value system that lies at the heart of their school ethos;
- Great capacity for sustained and ongoing improvement established through the close partnership working between all members of the school community.

Focus for development

- For governors and staff to review all policies in the light of the school's core values in order to make these explicit, rather than implicit, in the policies;
- Deepen opportunities for the children's individual spiritual development by threading opportunity for reflection throughout the curriculum; and using structured aids to support personal spiritual growth;
- To extend the range of Christian traditions and other faiths encountered by the children by linking Payhembury with schools in contrasting social and cultural contexts. The school has already identified ways to address this: namely through the 'Cross of Nails' scheme with Coventry diocese; the Isleworth project; and work with the local church schools' forum.

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

Perseverance, Acceptance, Respect, Care and Honesty are the central core values of this Christian community. Because of the exceptional coherence in the presentation of these values within the school and community, the mnemonic PARCH is seldom absent from any discussion with the children about their values and how they put these into practice. 'PARCH makes you have friends. With these core values, everyone's friends.' 'PARCH gets you to interact with people and the village and nature around us.' Parents value highly the

opportunities given to their children to explore their own individuality. Relationships within the school community are outstanding because each person values the others as children of God and acts accordingly. This powerful modelling impacts directly upon the inclusive nature of the school and children's behaviour, which is exemplary. The community, including the church, embraces the school. Members of the community feel that 'the school is the glue that makes the community stick together'. Because boundaries between school, church and community do not exist in the minds of the children they are able to flourish quite naturally as responsible citizens of their village. An example of this occurred during the inspection when a suddenly-arising opportunity for 'young enterprise' within the soon to be closed village shop was eagerly explored by headteacher and chair. This point is further illustrated by the latest examples of the children's participation in the local bulb show being vibrantly present in the school. The Christian character of the school is well supported by the school environment. The school has 'forest school' status and crosses made by the children from their areas of woodland bring richness to classrooms and corridors. Opportunities which the exterior environment offers for supporting the spiritual development of the children have started to be explored and, as part of this, collective worship is sometimes held outside. In the KS2 entrance an excellent 'Core Values Book' illustrates through Bible stories and references the Biblical application of the Christian values which the community value and embrace. Standards in RE are high and opportunities for reflection and personal application of learning intentions are built into the units of work.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the life of the school. All staff attend and all members of the school community receive affirmation through collective worship. The newly built village hall provides a fitting venue for the school to meet together; but the school community is equally at home in the church, which is within a short walk. The incumbent and headteacher have made it a priority to create 'synergy' between school and church, with the result that their vision for the school to be 'the seedbed' for the church has been met. The children participate in their worship with joy. Because collective worship is an integral part of the school day and is carefully planned and appropriately delivered, the children are attentive, genuinely engaged (rather than politely so), and responsive to an unusual degree. They remember themes clearly and offer prayer spontaneously – both spoken and written. Although all children have been given opportunity to evaluate CW as part of their self-assessment, they themselves feel that the space and time given to them to do this is not enough. They would like the scope of this assessment to be widened to enable them to reflect upon the wider application of their core values within their school – in effect, to be scaffolded in developing their own spirituality. The context of the school in terms of enabling the children to encounter diversity of belief and faiths is a real challenge. The school, however, has addressed this robustly through arranging a programme of visits to places of worship of other faiths in Exeter; seeking speakers from a range of Christian traditions to supplement the incumbent's direct teaching of Christian diversity; and partnering a large city school in a recent visit to France.

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

The partnership of the headteacher and chair of governors is inspirational. Both are determined to achieve the absolute best for all members of their community. The energy and attractiveness of their vision is contagious and has been enthusiastically and yet thoughtfully embraced by school staff. Christian values thread through the comments made by the head about her school – for example the humility implicit in her firm statement that the success achieved by the school is due to the dedication and love for the children of her entire team. Because all share the 'leadership' of the school ('My staff are my leadership team.') all share the responsibility of taking forward the Christian mission of the school, making its Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness unusually coherent and effective. The clear Christian values mean much to parents and to the community. Because the concept of church which the children encounter in school means so much to the children, their families make the time and effort to attend. The children take the Christian practices of grace, Bible reading and prayer quite naturally into their homes and parents are encouraged to adopt these practices because they see their positive impact on the development of their children. The local church schools' forum provides an excellent opportunity for headteachers and governors to work together in preparing for the future leadership of their church schools; and this is reinforced

by the part-time diocesan advisory post held by the chair of governors.

Governors are aware that the time is ripe for revision of school policies in the spirit of celebrating the wide impact of the core values on the life of the school. The partnership between the deeply committed spiritual leaders of both school and church is the catalyst for the rapid yet robust pace of school improvement.

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