

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Maddern's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Bellair Road
Madron
Penzance,
TR20 8SP

Diocese: Truro

Local authority: Cornwall

Date of inspection: 7th March 2013

Date of last inspection: 25th February 2010

School's unique reference number: 111996

Headteacher: Mrs Teresa Rowe

Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett 201

School context

St Maddern's is a much smaller than average size primary school with 29 children arranged into two class groups. The school serves the immediate locality with varied socio-economic backgrounds and significant rural disadvantage. The majority of children are from a white British heritage. The proportion from other ethnic groups is below the national average. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Maddern's as a Church of England school are good

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and is now more confident to express its Christian ethos and to celebrate the life of the school through its church foundation. This has created a community that is comfortable to express its views on faith and belief in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Christian values contribute to the children's well-being and the care for the individual ensures that the specific learning needs of all children are at the centre of their education.

Established strengths

- The high quality of relationships underpinned by the school's Christian ethos.
- The quality of care given to all children to ensure that they make progress in their learning and develop personally.
- The sense of fellowship that creates an inclusive atmosphere in collective worship.

Focus for development

- Embed a set of core Christian values in the life of the school so that they make a difference to the children's well-being and learning.
- Develop the use of enquiry in the teaching and learning of religious education (RE) to raise standards.
- Develop effective systems for leaders and managers, including governors, to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's new set of core Christian values.

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

Christian values are an explicit part of the life of the school. They are explored through collective worship but are also reflected in the way that the Christian ethos underpins the way that the school deals with behaviour and, particularly, the very high quality of care for the welfare and learning of every child. This is reflected in the extent to which the school ensures that individual progress in learning for children of all abilities is a central aspect of the school's drive for continued improvement. Equally important for the school is the well-being of

all children and the high level of care given to ensure that every child's unique needs are met. The school is revisiting its Christian values in a process involving all members of the school community to identify a distinct set of core Christian values through which the school can explore what it means to be a church school in greater depth. This process is at an early stage and the school is aware that, once agreed, these core values need to be embedded throughout all aspects of the life of the school. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent. Children make good friends and feel safe in school. They know that adults in school are there to look after them and help them if they have any worries. Children talk freely about matters of faith and belief and show a good level of respect for the views of others. Opportunities to develop spiritually are good. Children have a good understanding of the purpose of prayer. They show respect for the effect that prayer has for those who do believe but also explain how prayer isn't just for Christians because 'God would listen to anybody's prayers; it makes no difference to Him because He loves us all'. The school makes an important contribution to the life of the local community through its charity work and involvement in events such as providing a tea party for older members of the village. These occasions bring the community closer together and, as one parent said, help to create closer bonds between people of different ages.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

A significant aspect of collective worship is the feeling of fellowship that is engendered when children and adults sitting together, and facing each other, creates a sense of intimacy that makes acts of worship an inclusive experience. This was observed during the inspection when children responded very well to the opportunities to answer questions and the times to be still and reflect on the worship theme. Messages given in collective worship are clear and simple and relate to the children's own experiences. Themes are explicitly drawn from Bible stories and children understand the link between the teachings of Jesus and the values that the school promotes. For example, children explain how specific Bible stories help them to understand values such as forgiveness or thankfulness. Parents agree that their children use the values they learn about in collective worship to 'help guide their lives' and that they 'weave throughout both school and home'. Collective worship planning is currently based on a weekly theme with an explicit Christian value explored throughout that week. The vicar makes an excellent contribution to this planning of the weekly theme and his ideas are regularly followed up by staff throughout the week with children in other acts of worship or in the classroom. There is some informal evaluation of the impact of worship through comments from teachers and occasional feedback from children. This sometimes leads to improvement in the quality of worship. For example, by identifying themes that Key Stage 1 children may have found difficult to understand. As the school identifies its new set of core Christian values, it is keen to develop the programme of worship themes so that they more closely follow these core values and provide greater opportunities for children to understand them at greater depth.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The overall quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good. The school is aware that development is needed to ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school. The strengths of teaching are the opportunities that teachers give children to experience their learning in creative ways. For example, in a Key Stage 1 class, children were visibly amazed when they handled papyrus and were told that this was used for recording early Bible stories. In a Key Stage 2 class, children used drama to understand the story of a local saint as part of the emphasis of the local RE syllabus on Cornish Christianity. Currently the link between the teaching, and the learning activity, and the specific RE learning outcome is not clear. Children therefore make satisfactory progress in these lessons and achieve the intended learning outcomes identified in planning. The learning outcomes do not sufficiently challenge the children's understanding of the topics they are learning or identify how children are expected to apply what they have learned to deepen their understanding. The school is keen to develop the teaching and learning of RE through a greater emphasis on exploring religious concepts through the investigation of challenging questions. Currently children's progress in RE is monitored through the recording of what they have covered according to the curriculum requirements. There is some identification of the relative achievement of some children against expected progress. Assessment does not identify the level that children have attained or track their progress as they move through the school. Children respond well to their RE and are enthusiastic in the lessons. Relationships in the classroom are very good with

committed teachers focussed on the needs of the children. Teachers praise the children with positive comments and encourage them to answer questions. Children settle to their work well and are engaged in the learning activities.

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

The school has moved forward since the previous inspection in its understanding of what being a church school means. Adults in school are more confident in expressing what it means to them to be part of a church school and children are able to identify what they do that makes the school distinctively Christian. The headteacher articulates a clear vision for the school based on Christian principles and every child being unique to God. She cares deeply for each child and their families. This is something that is highly appreciated by parents and recognised by the school's governors. There are sufficient procedures to monitor the impact of the Christian character and for the school's leaders, including governors, to evaluate how effectively collective worship and the school's values make a difference to the lives of the children. As the school embeds its new core Christian values, and adapts its worship programme to reflect them, governors are aware that they will need to develop current monitoring systems to evaluate these developments. The headteacher is the RE leader and ensures that the subject has a high profile within the school curriculum. The subject makes a good contribution to the life of the school and promotes the Christian vision. Links with the local church are close and together they both form the heart of the local community. The vicar is well known to the children and makes a substantial difference to the Christian life of the school through leading acts of worship. Parents spoken to feel strongly that the school's approach to developing its Christian ethos is the right one for their children. They say that they are happy for their children to experience Christian teaching because it encourages them to follow a way of life based on values that they feel are important. Parents particularly appreciate the opportunities the school gives their children to reflect on and talk about faith openly in an environment of trust and respect.