

Compton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Higher Compton Road,
Plymouth, PL 3 5JB

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Plymouth
Dates of inspection: 3rd February 2011
Date of last inspection: 25th September 2002
School's unique reference number: 113416
Headteacher: Stephen Cleave
Inspector's name and number: Carole McCormack (224)

School context

The school is larger than average and is situated in an area of mixed housing in the city of Plymouth. It is regularly oversubscribed and is currently being extended. Over 90% of the children are of white British heritage but a range of faiths including Muslim and Hindu are represented within the school. A wide range of extra curricular activities, including the popular 'Kings club' run by the church youth worker, nurture the personal and academic achievement of the children.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Compton Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

All members of the school community are committed to the nurture and holistic education of all children. This means that relationships and the pastoral care of the children are very good; and academic standards are high due to the creation of a safe and secure environment in which all children feel confident to develop.

Established strengths

- A wide range of inclusive practices which maximises the opportunity of every learner to succeed
- Excellent relationships throughout the school
- Thoughtful and reflective children due to the creative curriculum which supports the development of higher order thinking skills

Focus for development

- The formulation of a new mission statement which encapsulates the distinctively Christian core values of the school agreed between all stakeholders
- Further development of ways to evaluate the impact of collective worship on each child and to support individual spiritual development
- Exploration by the governors, senior leadership team and clergy of ways to enrich the nurture and spiritual development of staff.

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

The children are very clear about the foundation of their school: 'We are a religious school. We worship Jesus.' 'We have Christian rules, we want to be kind.' Some parents have clearly chosen the school because they value the 'seeds' of Christian morality that will be sown in their children's lives.

Parents and carers value highly the inclusive nature of the provision at Compton: 'It welcomes every kind of faith. Every believer is respected.' This climate of respect, care and nurture causes the children's self-confidence and self-respect to grow. One Muslim child talked movingly of how he had been supported in his early years at the school and all older children recognised the range of skilful strategies developed by the staff to deal with problems. Children were clear that all members of the school community were intent upon 'making the school a better place.' A particularly striking example of this is the 'buddying' of younger children by the older children who genuinely love 'helping them' and 'getting to know them.'

The children are able to express themselves well. The P4C (Philosophy for Children) programme followed throughout the school stimulates careful consideration of the ideas of others, acknowledgement of their value, and clear expression of well founded personal opinion. The emphasis that the school places on the clear expression of abstract and philosophical thoughts is further demonstrated by the highly successful and deeply interesting workshop for gifted and talented children facilitated by the RE leader.

However, although underlying Christian values are acknowledged by children and adults in general terms, some focussed work needs to take place on what are the exact and specific core Christian values which underpin the school. Discussion on the development of an up to date Mission statement has taken place, but this now needs to be extended into a discussion of how the new Mission statement of the school will encapsulate these specific, distinctively Christian, core values. The need to enrich the school environment in order to provide further opportunities for quietness and reflection has already been identified by the school as a priority following the completion of the new building programme.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school has invested much work in the development of collective worship since the last inspection. Collective worship is seen as 'a fun occasion' and parents and carers see the headteacher as modelling the principle of reflectiveness.

The act of worship observed during the inspection was an interactive, highly relevant re-telling of a well-known parable. The children responded attentively and enthusiastically during the dramatic telling of the story and yet were quick to follow the change of expectation during the subsequent time of prayer and reflection.

Currently worship is planned by the headteacher and appropriately reflects a balance of themes relevant to the life and work of the school and the traditions of the Anglican church, including saints' days. It is anticipated that the incumbent will start to plan the yearly worship cycle with the headteacher in order to demonstrate even more clearly the core Christian values of the school during worship.

The current theme of worship and prayer are displayed in each classroom, in the entrance hall and in school hall. In some classrooms there is evidence that the area in which the theme and prayer are displayed is developing into a reflection area that the children refer to during the course of the school day. The mix during the week of whole school and class-based worship also provides good opportunity for children's questions to be explored and for a more individual approach to spiritual development to be followed. Both these factors increase the impact of worship on learners' own lives and support personal spiritual development. However a more consistent and rigorous approach to evaluating the impact of worship on each individual learner, and supporting the spiritual journey of each child, needs to be developed.

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

The headteacher and governors are unequivocal that the school is founded upon Christian values. The toolkit and SEF state this clearly; and the very effective website demonstrates this through images and the children's own words. However, many different values are cited in a variety of contexts as illustrations of the distinctively Christian character of the school. Some of these values are explicitly Christian in character with a clear Biblical basis (for example, self-control, goodness, kindness and patience). Others could equally apply to a humanistic provision (for example respect and individual effort). Further detailed work needs to be led by the headteacher and foundation governors in order to clarify the distinctively Christian nature of the school's core values.

Stakeholders are very clear about the school's Christian foundation and their comments, together with the evidence of the behaviour and attitudes of the learners, demonstrate in general terms the love and care at the heart of the provision. A sharper focus for development as a distinctive and effective church school would result from all stakeholders being involved in a detailed review of exactly which specifically Christian values drive the school. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the vision that drives the school is regular and includes parental questionnaires, an annual audit of aspects of church school provision and a worship review with the school council. But an opportunity for face to face discussions between all stakeholders, in order to explore shared Christian values, is now appropriate.

Religious Education is well led and the principle of reflectiveness is evident in the planning and assessment of the subject. The RE leader has some good ideas to develop opportunities for reflection within the school environment which can be taken forward by the school leadership in their planned programme of enrichment.

Staff are clearly very happy at the school. They value their colleagues, love the children and strive to create an environment where the spiritual needs of the children can be met. However, to date, the school has not created regular shared opportunities for all staff and governors to reflect on the nature of church school improvement. It would now therefore be appropriate and affirming for all, if the headteacher, senior leaders and governors worked together to devise opportunities for reflection and enjoyment within the cycle of continuing professional development for all staff.