

**Buckland Newton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Buckland Newton  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT2 7BY

**Diocese: Salisbury**

Local Authority: Dorset  
Date of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> July 2012 (Diocesan Review March 2013)  
Date of last inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009  
School's Unique Reference Number: 113776  
Headteacher: Mrs Nicola Ralph  
Inspector's name and NS number: Mrs Anne Davey 706

**School context**

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school with 82 pupils on roll; pupils are drawn from the village and surrounding areas and are mainly of white British heritage. 10% of pupils are at school action plus or have a statement of special education needs. The school recently opened a pre-school provision on site which currently has 9 children in it. The chair of governors was new to the role this year and the headteacher returned to the school in September 2011 following her year-long secondment to another school.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Buckland Newton as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Buckland Newton Primary School is a highly effective church school. Behaviour is excellent, standards are high, every child is valued and all aspects of school life are based on the Christian values of love, care and respect. The leadership is reflective, committed and has a clear vision for the future. The strong links between church and community sustain and nurture staff, students and others and the rural environment of the school is embraced and understood as something God has made.

**Established strengths**

- Children are very well known, listened to and valued
- Prayer is embedded in the culture of the school
- There is a high degree of respect among pupils and staff, and for the environment
- There is a high commitment from school leaders and governors to the Christian character of the school and a strong capacity to improve

**Focus for development**

- Develop the outside spaces in the school to provide additional opportunities for spiritual reflection that embrace the rural setting
- Embed a planning and evaluation cycle for the Christian character of the school that enables all stakeholders to contribute fully.

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

Christian values of love and respect consistently enhance relationships and underpin the curriculum. The school holds the Level 2 Rights Respecting School award and this is clearly promoted throughout the school. For example, pupils are reminded at the drinking fountain that access to clean water is a right, and they can explain their responsibilities in terms of waste water management and water conservation and take pride in being able to make a

difference. Members of staff are well aware of the link between this and the Christian theology of creation and care for God's world. This has been successfully explored with pupils through links made to the Religious Education (RE) curriculum and through the celebration of Christian festivals such as Wassailing. This implicitly based Christian ethos of the school at the centre of this rural community is effectively enhanced by the very visual presence of the church in school. Pupils have created a school song based on children's rights. There are many other aspects of school life which demonstrate the values of love, care and respect, for example the "buddy bus stop" in the playground ensures all children are included at play time and the response of the School Council to local and national crises, for example in suggesting a specific fund-raising event. The School Council is active and its suggestions are taken seriously by the whole school. The quality of relationships among everyone in the school community is very high. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes appropriate focus on RE and PSHE; there is a high degree of cooperation among pupils, parents, staff and the wider community, and any conflicts are resolved rapidly and effectively. For example, children sit in Collective Worship in buddy groups, where older children take responsibility for supporting the good behaviour of younger pupils. Pupils are proud of their achievements and school tracking systems ensure that all children make progress. Both achievement and progress are acknowledged in the weekly Celebration Assembly and good behaviour, kindness and good deeds are recognised alongside academic endeavour.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Care is taken to create well organised and peaceful spaces and times where worship can take place and pupils respond by adopting a respectful quiet during worship times, both in church and in school. Daily worship is attended by the whole school community and both pupils and staff participate fully. All are enthusiastic about the impact of the 'Open the Book' worship led by members of the local Anglican church, and the children also enjoy dramatising Bible stories themselves. Pupils are enabled to explore a range of worshipping traditions through the regular involvement of a youth worker from a church in Yeovil. Pupils lead prayers regularly and are enthusiastic singers. Sixty percent of the children learn a musical instrument and regularly play in collective worship. This is appreciated by both players and listeners. Collective worship is informally evaluated and pupils' views taken into account. Worship is not confined to a daily assembly and clearly influences thoughts and actions at other times. Prayer is an embedded aspect of school life and pupils are confident to pray, leading prayers in worship but also outside of worship time, using the prayer tables in their classrooms. They can do this when supported by staff but also report doing so wholly independently. Pupils understand and can apply the need for different types of prayer at different times – for example, they can praise God's creation, give thanks for food and understand how to ask for help if someone they know is ill or sad. Pupils listen to and respect their teachers and other staff and value the chances they have to give thanks during the school day. Pupils are keen to share their own prayers and have written a school prayer book. One pupil commented that "it is cool to pray here."

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

The governors are highly involved in the life of the school and committed to its development. For example, one foundation governor volunteers as a classroom assistant for a morning once a week. All Governors know their school well and regularly review its aims and policies.. The staff recruitment process ensures all are made aware of these aims at interview, and so enhances the embedding of the school's distinctive ethos. Prospective parents are also made aware when they are shown around the school. Governance is clear and strong and demonstrates a high degree of confidence in the school's leadership. The leadership team consistently models high expectations and continual challenge, combined with kindness, humility, honesty and reflection. The involvement and support of local clergy is clearly valued by everyone and parents regularly support collective worship which celebrates the children's achievements and marks Christian festivals. The school works closely with the church community and has links with a community in Kenya, raising money and sourcing resources.

Religious Education (RE) is valued as a subject and the RE co-ordinator has led recent training for all staff on the revised syllabus. Leaders are very aware of the positive contribution that the school's Christian character makes to the whole school community but this is not always effectively monitored in a formal way. Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the schools Christian character are still informal and developing, this was an issue highlighted at the last denominational inspection there has been limited progress on this. There are clearly excellent plans to continue to improve the school as a distinctive and effective church school; however these plans are only beginning to embed. For example, the Head and governors are planning an outdoor reflection area, to enhance pupils' spiritual appreciation of the rural setting but the project was not included in the development plan until this year.

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