

Charlton Mackrell Church of England Primary School

Bonfire Lane
Charlton Mackrell
Somerton
TA11 7BN

Diocese: Bath & Wells

Local authority: Somerset
Dates of inspection: 5 May 2011
Date of last inspection: 4 December 2007
School's unique reference number: 123746
Headteacher: Gilly Kempton
Inspector's name and number: Heather Dowding - 719

School context

The school serves the village of Charlton Mackrell and surrounding areas. The proportion of pupils believed to be entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The overall percentage of pupils with special educational needs/disabilities is below average. The 74 pupils on roll are taught in three classes, all of which contain more than one year group. There is an independently run pre-school on the site. School numbers are rising as the result of the closure of a neighbouring school, a recent increase in families moving into the villages and newly formed wider catchment area.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Charlton Mackrell as a Church of England school are good with some outstanding aspects

Christian values permeate every aspect of school life making it a very special place. The school's clear vision and drive ensures that all its work is rooted in clear Christian principles. This results in a strong school family which lives out God's love through words and actions.

Established strengths

- The distinctive Christian vision and aims which are applied to all aspects of school life
 - The quality of care, support and relationships within the school and beyond
- Links with parents, church and community

Focus for development

- To include all worship leaders in the planning of collective worship
 - To formalise the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship
- To improve the learners' experience and understanding of other faith communities and the worldwide church.

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

Christian values are central to the life of the school and its curriculum. They are shared and owned by the whole school community. The school is working very effectively to relate its Golden Rules to Christian values with the values of love and kindness underpinning the school's strong ethos and serving to bind the school community. This is shown in the high quality of care and support offered to children and their families and the very positive relationships which exist at all levels. One parent said 'Care is unsurpassable in this school.' Pupils said, 'The teachers and head make us feel very special. You can tell that everyone cares about us.' The pupils are able to describe the values as those Jesus taught and lived by and how they help them to help others and 'make the right decisions in life.' They understand the significance of belonging to a church school which leads them to having a strong commitment to the care and service of others, in the school and in the local and wider community. There are many opportunities for them to demonstrate this and they are able to describe the various ways in which they help each other such as by being playground friends at their 'friendship bus stop' or by extending a very warm welcome to children new to the school, particularly those whose school has recently closed. Pupils take an active part in community events in the church and the village, for example the strongly supported school orchestra often provides music in the church and many children perform in the village pantomime. They are, therefore, encouraged to become responsible citizens and their positive responses to their work for charities, particularly the Samaritans' Purse and the Children's Society are examples of how they are being prepared for their future lives. The well planned environment contributes to the pupils' excellent spiritual development. Displays are lively and thought provoking and often completed by the whole school working together.

There are Christian signs and symbols and prayer boxes and boards all around the school. There are areas for reflection some of which include professional art work to inspire questions and evoke responses from the children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship plays a very important part in the life of the school and is highly valued by the whole school community. Children and parents of faith and no faith spoke very positively about the opportunities for worship and were particularly appreciative of the fact that the whole school worships in the parish church on a weekly basis. This provides a strong link to the local community and enables the Benefice team to be very effectively involved in the life of the school. Pupils engage well with worship, give very thoughtful responses to questions, are keen to be involved and treat worship with reverence and respect. They enjoy the experience and the ritual of the occasion and are particularly enthusiastic about singing during worship. When the candle was lit at the beginning of worship the children were able to say that they did this to remind them that Jesus is the light of the world. Pupils spoke very positively of how worship impacts on them. One child said, 'It helps us to find peace.' while another said, 'It makes us think, 'Wow! That's amazing! How did he do that?' Worship is well planned with themes clearly linked to Christian values and festivals. The planning is currently largely undertaken by the headteacher but the School Development Plan recognises the need to involve all worship leaders in planning in the future. There are some opportunities for pupils to be involved with the planning of worship, for example the annual Leavers' Service, and children are asked informally for their views on worship. The monitoring of worship is undertaken on an informal basis in discussions with staff and foundation governors. The school knows that it needs to make this a more formal process in the future and the School Development Plan includes actions to address this issue.

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

The effective leadership and commitment of the headteacher ensure that the Christian character of the school is at its heart and that its ongoing development is seen as a priority for all. The governors are fully aware of their responsibility for ensuring the continued development of its church school distinctiveness and have an understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school through detailed reports from the headteacher and by gaining the views of parents and other stakeholders. Areas identified for development are included in the Church Distinctiveness section of the School Development Plan. Partnerships with parents, the local church and the community are a very strong feature of the school and very highly valued by all stakeholders. The opportunities this creates, such as the worship held in the church and involvement in village life are appreciated by pupils and their parents and provide benefits to all. For example, elderly members of the community are invited to tea with the pupils at the school and members of the church help when the school uses the church for its annual festival where art work is displayed and the school orchestra gives performances. Staff express how highly they value the strong Christian ethos and support given by the church, which has been invaluable, especially when there were some difficult times in the school. This support coupled with good staff development ensures that staff are well prepared to be future leaders of church schools. There are beneficial links with two independent schools and plans to link to a school which provides for children with learning disabilities. Children learn about world faiths and global issues and the leadership and management of the school are aware of the need to explore opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge of other faith communities and the worldwide church. A link is being developed with a school in Kenya which is causing great excitement for the children.