

Answering some questions about Church School Distinctiveness at Charlton Mackrell Church of England Primary School...

Our Christian values lead everything we do here. At the very centre of the values is love, which runs through us like the writing inside a stick of rock. We love one another as Jesus loves us. Worship is based on these values as well as service –



We focus on a different Christian value each half term or term. In the Spring term we focused on friendship and in the Summer term, we are focusing on forgiveness and compassion. Christian values are essential to our school and we expect everyone to use these as a basis for dealing with others and for inclusion into the day to day life of the school and classroom. Staff and governors promote our Christian and British values. We use the Values for Life resources and various other materials.

How do relationships between members of the school community reflect the school's Christian values?

As we respect each member of our school family equally, it is very easy to forge strong relationships. The staff team is itself a very caring and happy group of people, who role model our values. We see compassion, kindness, respect on all sides and when dealing with problems, always try to ensure that forgiveness is sought. We aim to be open and welcoming and hope that parents can come to us with any worries or issues. We believe that we genuinely have great relationships with all of our families and children. As a result of this open approach and the fact that we know our families well, problems can be nipped in the bud promptly. We benefit from close relationships with our wider community, who continue to support us and offer assistance.



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Is Collective Worship important in the life of the school? Yes, it definitely is! For a number of reasons – firstly, because it brings us all together in one place to share the same message and love is often a very tangible feeling in the hall when we are altogether to share a story or a success of a family member. We encourage everyone to love each other as Jesus loves us.

As we are a Church of England school, God’s message is very important to us, so having opportunities to share stories and prayers is considered very special. Jesus is central to our school. Collective Worship takes on many forms throughout the school week and on Tuesdays, we all enjoy our walks to the church to see who will be leading our worship today. It can be any one of our Parish partners (Alan, Chris or Jenny) or our Open the Book team. The Bible stories are brought to life and the children often get involved in the action.

Our aim is that all children feel God’s love is with them wherever they are during the day and that love will always be with them. Collective Worship is an opportunity to remind children of that fact.

We have a rolling programme based on Christian values and the life of Jesus Christ. Our Values for Life materials are helping us all to deepen our own understanding, which enables us to grow in confidence when leading worship.



What about opportunities for prayer and reflection? especially in Collective Worship, but also at other times of the day. We have a morning prayer, lunch time grace and end of the day prayer, and children are encouraged to say their own prayers. Children all learn the Lord’s Prayer and sing our special school prayer (which is always a really special and spiritual moment for all those who listen). Children choose different places around the school to find peace and be reflective. The children would like to have a peace garden, so staff and parents are working with the School Council. Discussions are underway.



How do the children learn about Christianity and other faiths? The children are developing good knowledge and understanding of Christianity through RE lessons and Collective Worship. They also learn about the worldwide church and other world faiths in RE and the main festivals are introduced during the year. RE lessons are held regularly and the Diocese of Bath & Wells scheme of work is followed on a two year rolling programme. Across the school, children enjoy hearing Bible stories and getting involved in discussing the themes. This means that they are learning to respect the faith of other people from the UK and around the world. They are beginning to understand that there are differences and similarities between world religions.

Links with St Mary's Church – we are very lucky to have such an amazing church on our doorstep with an amazing team to go with it! We work together with our team, enjoying great support from our Parish partners and also the Diocese. Equally, our relationships with the **local community** are strong and we are blessed to be so well supported by the Charlton villages, including Kingsdon.

What do we do to help develop children's spirituality?

...simply experiencing being in our school's beautiful, historic building and grounds with stunning views from every angle...through developing a love of music, both listening and playing, the arts, pleasure in learning, pleasure in being in one's own company and in that of others, enjoying the outdoor environment; appreciating the peace of the and majesty of our church, our beautiful school hall before collective worship and at other times, awe and wonder at nature; by providing opportunities for the children to lead their own study and research an area of interest; we encourage them to say prayers and to take leaps of faith in their learning. Year 6 pilgrim days at Wells Cathedral are very spiritual with plenty of opportunities for peace and reflection.

How do we enable our children to develop morally...

We provide lots of opportunities for children to discuss the dos and the don'ts, rights and responsibilities, the importance of rules and consequences, comment on situations, in worship and in PSHE, in small groups, 1:1 with an adult, or in a whole school situation.

and socially?

We do lots of things together like eating, talking, performing, collaborative project work, extra curricular activities and trips and visits to widen the children's knowledge and experiences. The older children have an opportunity to be part of a residential week and experience (many for the first time) a few days away from home. Explorium for our older children has meant an emphasis on co-operation and collaboration to get a joint project completed to a deadline and opportunities to meet children from other schools are important too. The Huish transition programme ensures that our children meet their peers from other schools in a social situation. Also, we insist on good manners and politeness, with respect for all people. Drama is used to develop improvisation and quick thinking.



This year, we took two thirds of the school to join 6000 other children at the young Voices event and our children were able to socialise with pupils from other schools from around the country. Some of our children went to a maths day, which involved working alongside children from other areas.

Do we manage to provide opportunities for our children to develop culturally?

We always try to make the most of opportunities to open our children's eyes to performance, whether it be drama, dance or music and where possible, arrange visits to theatres, museums and galleries to widen their knowledge of other peoples and historic eras. The older children keep up-to-date with current affairs through our subscription to the weekly 'First Times' newspaper.

In the summer, Hurricane and Wildfire classes are visiting a synagogue, Hindu temple and art gallery. The children will all experience our sports week, which will introduce many to new activities, including street dance and martial arts.

Children learn about being British, through history, current affairs, through joining in British traditions, such as remembrance, country dancing.

What is outstandingly Christian about the CM curriculum?

As we believe that children are all equal in God's eyes, our ethos is that all children deserve a broad and balanced curriculum to ensure all receive the provision they each deserve and to appeal to all interests and abilities.

Therefore, music, art and PE are given equal importance as well as a big emphasis on humanities and science.

French is taught at KS2. The consequence of this is that our children develop into well rounded young people, who have self-belief and who have most likely represented their school with pride. This year alone, we have had children representing our area at County level in netball, gymnastics and cross country. Each year, our swimmers excel in a number of galas. The marked similarity in the majority of our children is their determination to succeed, combined with a pride and willingness to take part.



As we believe music has the power to do many things, from making people happy, to moving people spiritually whilst stimulating the brain for learning, all children get involved in music. We have a growing reputation for excellence in this area with our own orchestra, chamber choir and whole school choir, led by our inspirational music specialist.

We know we have high expectations of behaviour, but does everyone?

We are delighted that the Ofsted Inspector recognised the exceptional and exemplary behaviour of our pupils. It is always amazing to see the children playing beautifully together and genuinely caring for each other. Like any family, we experience the odd fall-out from time to time, but most disagreements are promptly sorted out and forgiveness prevails.

However, we have clear golden rules and consequences for those who choose not to stick to these rules. The children are periodically reminded of the rules. We encourage good behaviour using our Inspire team points and positive reinforcement. We encourage all children to be assertive when dealing with children who are choosing to be unkind and try to solve minor situations themselves first before talking to an adult. However, if situations deteriorate, we move swiftly and will contact parents if necessary. We will not tolerate bullying of any kind as this

would conflict our belief that everyone is loved and accepted as children of God. We share the importance of forgiveness and thus allowing children to move on with a fresh start.

So, what is the impact of what we do?

- Our small school is a very happy place because we have a strong, loving family ethos, with Christian values and principles at its core, which impact in many ways; our children are confident, generous, open and giving and genuinely delight in the successes of others. As God's children, everyone is treated equally; differences are celebrated. Children grow up feeling safe. They say they trust their friends and staff. This makes for a very special and joyful school. Children grow up feeling loved, valued and cherished with great self-belief. As a result, they flourish in all aspects of school life and beyond. The commitment of the whole team to sharing our Christian principles means that Charlton Mackrell School meets the needs of all its children. As Christian values are clearly understood, children's behaviour is very good and they form strong relationships with their peers, older and younger pupils and with all members of the school team. They are also confident with members of the community and visitors. Pupils know that they can speak to anyone on the team and will be taken seriously.



- The staff team also benefit from this whole school ethos and are guardian angels, who carry out random acts of kindness for a colleague. People say how much they value knowing that there is someone nearby looking out for them, encouraging, and sometimes consoling, them.
- With these Christian practices in mind, it is clear that children grow into confident young people, who achieve well year on year. As a result of our values, combined with excellent teaching, high expectations and strong relationships, our school has a consistently successful record over time and this year is one of the highest performing schools in Somerset. Progress is always good and often better than good. With this platform of quality teaching and great results, children go on to excel at senior school.
- Attendance is good because children love coming to school.
- We are an inclusive school, admitting a number of children with significant allergies and others with specific and global needs. Also, children with particular talents in any area of the curriculum are encouraged, for example, to attend G&T days and able maths and writing days, resulting in even greater confidence.
- Due to our drive to give all children what they deserve to reach their potential, we use our pupil premium funding to enhance the lives of those children, in particular with supporting their music and swimming development. We believe those children have grown in confidence and achieve well in national curriculum tests. Recently, half of our Year 6 pupils were PP or E6, receiving a full programme of support – all achieved very well, with some achieving above average progress from their starting points.
- Such is our intent to ensure all children receive what they need at any time, we took the decision to employ a special nurture teaching assistant, who has been trained specially to support our more vulnerable children and those who have unexpected critical events and stresses, such as a bereavement. Children quickly feel benefit from their time in a 1:1 situation and we are currently planning how to turn a small room into a peaceful haven where sessions can take place.
- Equally, pupils with special education needs and those finding certain aspects of the curriculum tricky, are given the support they need, whenever they need it, hence our decision to employ full time teaching

assistants in each class. This enables the class teacher to plan interventions and smaller group work, which are run by the teacher or their TA. To give children equal opportunities, we started a homework club run by the headteacher where the children may use the computers to complete homework and have the opportunity to work within a smaller group situation. Children enjoy 1:1 time with their HT.

- Taking part in many village and charity events throughout the year, including the annual pantomime, church services and fund-raising efforts such as Sports Relief, children learn about service and being members of a community and what it means to be a good citizen.
- Our staff team has evolved over time, which has meant that the governors have been able to recruit inspirational, creative and talented teachers and support staff who also share our Christian philosophy.
- Having a small team also means that everyone keeps a look-out for children experiencing difficulties, either at playtimes or during class time. We meet as a staff once a week and have fortnightly whole staff meetings to discuss children and progress. Teachers consult each other and support staff informally all the time, which means that issues can be flagged up and swift action taken. Our team is always laughing – there is a great sense of happiness and love in our staff room, which naturally spills out into the whole school – consequently, children see human beings with a sense of humour and that it is ok not to take oneself too seriously.



- The impact of being a small team also means that we talk a lot about strengths and weaknesses and what we need to do next, and we set aspirational targets. We are accurate in our self-evaluation (recognised by the Ofsted Inspector, January 2016)
- Having a fully committed and supportive Governing Body ensures that the work of our Christian school is seen throughout the school and beyond the school gate. The governors endeavour to ensure that all people are valued with a focus on the wellbeing of all.

