

## The Christian Distinctiveness of Old Sodbury C of E Primary School

As you will know, Church of England schools are state-funded schools with a distinctive Christian character, grounded in Christian values. Approximately one quarter of all primary schools in England today are Church of England schools and it is our privilege that Old Sodbury is one of them.

Each diocese of the Church of England runs a Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) to support its many schools. Their motto is “Deeply Christian, serving the common good” and their vision is to promote education in schools, colleges and universities that allows children and young people to flourish in the widest sense. This is based on a Bible verse from John 10, verse 10:

*‘I have come that you might have life – life in all its fullness.’*

In Old Sodbury school, every day starts with Collective Worship, reflecting the traditions of the Church of England. This is the unique heartbeat of our school, offering opportunities for all the children to engage in conversations about God and to reflect on what it means to live out their motto, based on Matthew 5:16, *‘Let your Light Shine,’* proudly displayed on the home page of the school website and on a poster at the school entrance and in the school hall.

It is estimated that, throughout England, local parish churches dedicate a million hours every year to working with children and young people. We, in St John’s, Old Sodbury, play our own part in this with visits to school to take Collective Worship and in hosting and assisting in services in the church. Both Revd. Chris and Revd. Jane regularly take Collective Worship. Also, approximately twice a year, they hold ‘Ask the Vicar’ sessions when they meet with a class to answer any and all questions the children may have. Additionally, approximately twice each month, a group of our own church members, The Bible Storytellers, take Collective Worship, enacting for the children the wonderful and memorable stories from both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Under the leadership of Revd. Chris, themes are planned for the forthcoming term so that there is consistency and continuity in the Christian message that it is our privilege to bring.

Throughout January to March this year we are challenging the children to have a deeper understanding of what it means to ‘let their lights shine’. Focusing on the Gospels, we are reminding the children of the wonderful way in which Our Lord lived this out throughout his earthly life and through the wonderful parables he told. The children love being involved in acting these with us and, every one of our Bible Storytellers absolutely loves this regular interaction with the children. There is always an opportunity for the children to reflect on what they have heard and how they might apply this in their own lives. A large book is available in the hall where any children can write a reflection on what they wish to share from that collective worship.

You, as members of the PCC, play a very important role, not only in supporting this ministry financially when the need has arisen, but also in seeking to have a representative on the school’s Ethos Committee. We are very appreciative of the many years of faithful service given to the school by Edna Cooper, both on the Ethos Committee and as a member of our Bible Storytellers. Thank you, Edna!

Additionally, it is your responsibility to recommend to the Diocese of Gloucester the appointment of a Foundation Governor. I have had the privilege of serving in this capacity for almost 4 years now and I have enjoyed every minute! Thank you!

Sheila Purdom