

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Woolhampton Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Woolhampton

Reading

RG7 5TB

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: West Berkshire

Dates of inspection: 23 September, 2011

Date of last inspection: 28 March 2008

School's unique reference number: 110025

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Bingham

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Rosemary Bartlett NS 120

School context

This is a small rural school with most pupils coming from beyond the catchment area. Attainment on entry varies considerably each year. The headteacher has been in post for six years and there is a stable staff team.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Woolhampton Primary School as a Church of England school are good

Christian values are at the heart of the school's daily life. Because of the importance given to the wellbeing and progress of each child within a loving Christian ethos, the children grow in confidence and in respect for others. The good support of the local vicar, who is also the chair of governors, and the close involvement of parents contribute well to the school's identity as a church school.

Established strengths

- The headteacher's vision for fostering all aspects of children's development, which is based on clear Christian values
- The purposeful and effective team work of the staff
- The contribution of the school environment to pupils' spiritual wellbeing and progress

Focus for development

- Make more explicit the Christian values implicit in the school's Christian ethos and clearly evident in its daily life
- Further develop assessment of pupils' work in religious education
- Establish recording, monitoring and evaluating of collective worship

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

This is because the headteacher and staff exemplify Christian values in their relationships with one another and see each child as unique and precious. Christian love, forgiveness and reconciliation are at the heart of school life. As a result the children feel secure and happy and learn to respect others. In discussion during the inspection their comments included 'If we fall out with a friend we can sort out what we've done wrong and make up'. Thankfulness and generosity are also consistently fostered. Because of this, the children have a well developed concern for others which shows itself in their thoughtful responses to each other as well as in their enthusiastic support of charitable causes, such as the Operation Christmas Box. Their behaviour is outstanding, well supported by the school's calm and purposeful ethos. Pupils benefit from the ongoing programme of refurbishment which reflects a clear understanding of the ways in which pupils learn. The senior pupils have a spacious classroom with a dedicated computer for each pupil, which enables them to link their learning in school with learning at home. The youngest pupils benefit from a bright, inviting classroom with many displays to stimulate their learning, such as the Party House role play area. Creative plans are under discussion for the refurbishment of the other two classrooms. The curriculum reflects Christian values and is well matched to pupils' strengths and needs. There is a very good variety of extra curricular activities including the photography club, which was set up following a request from parents and children, and which provides further opportunities for pupils to explore and celebrate the beauty of the natural world as seen, for example, in close ups of spiders' webs. The school grounds have been imaginatively developed, contributing well to pupils' enjoyment and wellbeing. The quiet garden provides an inviting space for reflection and is seen by the children as a 'special place'. During the inspection, members of the school council spoke about their appreciation for the way in which the surface of the outdoor play area had been transformed from a muddy mess to grass, with a variety of play equipment. Pupils benefit from access to the extensive playing field area which is shared by a number of local schools. Good use is made of the wooded areas where older pupils enjoy building dens and the younger children have the opportunity to explore the wonders of nature.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Children are attentive and responsive in acts of worship. They are regularly involved in leading it, as seen during the inspection when one of the classes very effectively narrated and mimed the story of Matthew meeting Jesus. The narrators spoke confidently and those acting clearly enjoyed taking part. They held the full attention of all those present. Acts of worship include a good balance of story, song and silent reflection. Children understand that the purpose of worship is 'to remind us of God and Jesus'. They know that the lighting of the candle symbolises Jesus as the light of the world. Senior monitors effectively manage the projected visual images and the music that introduce worship. These are very well chosen and contribute well to a sense of stillness, and of wonder. The children clearly enjoy singing songs such as 'He's got the whole world in His hands'. Collective worship is enthusiastically and confidently managed. The vicar's regular contribution to leading school worship is much valued by adults and pupils alike. The school has rightly identified a need for clearer planning for worship, and for establishing a system for recording, monitoring and evaluating worship. Acts of worship clearly affect the children's lives both in school and beyond as seen with the theme of forgiveness explored during the inspection. Children often remember Bible stories well and sometimes talk about them at home with their families.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in religious education (RE) are overall good because teaching is challenging and pupils learn through well varied activities including drama, singing and cooking. Through the use of effective questioning their skills of reflection and communication are well developed. Good use of role play was observed during a lesson in which pupils expressed their understanding very well as they answered the questions of their peers. Pupils learn about the Sermon on the Mount and compare this teaching with the Ten Commandments. They also learn about the teachings on codes of conduct in Hinduism and Sikhism. RE contributes well to pupils' understanding of individual responsibility and the importance of community. Well chosen examples from real life develop pupils' understanding of the consequences of right and wrong actions. Younger pupils make good progress because the content of lessons is also well matched to their age and ability and they are encouraged to participate, to share their own experience. The good pace of the lesson observed meant that pupils' interest was well maintained throughout. Learning about Harvest had included firsthand experience of picking fruit and vegetables and of finding out about 'the squirrels' harvest'. A sense of wonder and appreciation was well developed through teaching on being thankful and the importance of giving. In discussion pupils showed clear interest in RE and they respect the fact that people have different faiths. They spoke about having been invited, during an RE lesson, to say if they did or did not believe in God. This helps them to develop sensitivity towards different points of view. Their thoughtful, questioning approach to RE was heard in the comment of a pupil about an image of the cross 'But isn't that breaking a Commandment?' The vicar's contribution to the teaching of Christianity is much valued and the school makes good use of St Peter's church next door, which enables pupils to gain a sense of being in a place of Christian worship. The school has yet to develop and fully implement assessment of pupils' progress in RE.

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

The headteacher's vision clearly reflects the school's Christian values and contributes significantly to pupils' development. He is well supported by the vicar and his vision inspires the staff team. This is a welcoming school, with clear displays of its church foundation in the entrance lobby. There is a friendly and purposeful ethos in which it is clear that all aspects of school life and plans for development are focussed on the wellbeing and progress of the pupils, and are based on Christian values. Appreciation of the natural environment has led to a sensitive and effective development of the school grounds. Staff regularly lead in-house training sessions which strengthen professional development and contribute well to the staff team spirit. The headteacher and staff are now committed to identifying and communicating more explicitly those Christian values which are at the heart of its daily life. Governors are increasingly clear about their role in monitoring the curriculum and they comment on the good progress made by the school since the last inspection, reflected in the confidence and outstanding behaviour of pupils. The headteacher ensures that all prospective parents are made fully aware of the school's Christian ethos on their initial visit. This is a school that listens to pupils and parents through a variety of links. Parents' views are regularly sought and in a recent survey they commented positively on the school's Christian values. They express increasing confidence in the school and speak with appreciation of its contribution to their children's lives. The school's situation somewhat outside the village means that the local community is not easily accessible but the school has good links with neighbouring schools which include enrichment activities and competitive sports tournaments. The school was last inspected three years ago. Two areas were identified for development at that time. One of these has been well addressed: pupils now play an active part in worship. The second, including monitoring and evaluating of worship is a current focus.