

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### The John Henry Newman Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Grange Road,  
Littlemore,  
Oxford,  
OX4 4LS

**Diocese:** Oxford

LA: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006

Date of last inspection:

School's Unique reference number: 132752

Headteacher: Jennifer Lee

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field

#### School context

This larger than average school opened in September 2003 as the amalgamation of a church school and a community school. Most pupils came from an area of social deprivation and from schools in special measures or causing concern. Their attainment on admission was very low. The new Governing body faced the challenge of establishing a Christian ethos in a situation where the community had experienced very different value systems and was anxious about the nature of the new school. In the last two years there has been significant staff turnover. The attainment of pupils on entry is below average and the school has accepted pupils with significant behavioural difficulties.

#### Summary Judgement

This school has established itself as a good church school serving its community. Christian values are demonstrated in the way that the school meets the needs of the children and there is a strong and effective partnership with the Church.

#### Established strengths

- The school is an integral part of the Church's mission in serving this challenging community.
- The care shown in meeting the needs of individual children and families so that pupils can learn effectively.
- The partnership between the headteacher and clergy team in a shared vision for the school.

#### Focus for development

- To develop consistency in the teaching and learning of Religious Education.
- To build opportunities for spiritual development into classroom life.

#### How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

The school has reached a good standard in meeting the needs of all learners through its Christian ethos.

The school has effectively introduced a number of initiatives to support individual children and families. Some are professionally led, others, such as Sunshine Friends involve Year 6 pupils in resolving conflict and developing good relationships. The high level of care shown by the staff is creating an effective working community where pupils feel valued and are able to make good progress. It is underpinned by Christian values and this is understood by the whole community. The importance of forgiveness is evident when children explain that good behaviour is particularly celebrated if someone has made a new start either with friends or in their personal conduct. The various reward systems in place motivate children to achieve. The school plays a key role in the Church's mission to serve its community. The building is used as a centre for holiday activities and the curate runs an after school club for 'Godly Play' which gives a spiritual dimension to the lives of pupils who may not have a faith background. The Comenius project enriches school life through European links but children particularly note the importance of charity days which help them to recognise the needs of others.

#### What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

Collective Worship makes a satisfactory impact on the school community.

This is because children are given a broad experience of worship but the school has rightly identified the need for more time for personal reflection and spiritual development.

Themes for worship are based on the Church year and a cycle of monthly values. These values have a high profile in school and teachers ensure that they contribute to the moral and social development of children. The way that these values are used in worship, however, is inconsistent and does not always relate to religious beliefs. When there is no link there are missed opportunities for spiritual development. Children know the significance of a candle in worship and can relate this to their school logo but visual symbols are not always used to indicate that worship is a distinctive time in the day.

The range of leaders and different styles of worship gives children a good understanding of both the wider and local Anglican traditions. This is through visits to the parish church, Christ Church Cathedral and Newman College. Key festivals and events in the school year are celebrated in the context of worship so that the leavers' service, Mothering Sunday and St Nicholas festival are becoming established in the pattern of the year. Parents and children recognise worship as part of the distinctive ethos and would welcome more opportunities to participate. Times of silence for Remembrance Day and in response to international disasters have made a powerful impact on pupils. They speak of the value of these times and the need to spend more time considering the big issues in life. This confirms the school's own evaluation of areas for development.

#### **How effective is the religious education?**

Religious Education is satisfactory overall.

There are sharp inconsistencies in standards of teaching and learning across the school and the reasons for this relate to the challenging circumstances in which the school was established. Where there is good and sometimes excellent practice, teachers develop children's religious thinking through carefully structured questioning which retains their interest. This enables pupils to make connections between beliefs and how people live their lives. This contributes to their spiritual development because they reflect on significant moments they themselves remember. The written work of these children is marked by teachers with reference to what they are learning and with sensitive comments recognising their individual religious backgrounds. Where teaching is less effective the tasks set demand more of literacy skills than of religious knowledge and understanding and expectations are low. These differences need to be understood in relation to the significant constraints there have been on the school's ability to raise standards. Pupils in Years 4,5 &6 still have huge gaps in their knowledge and although teachers assess the prior knowledge of their pupils' accurately they need to make careful decisions about what to teach. The school has rightly focused on developing behaviour and skills for learning. This is only now sufficiently embedded to allow effective teaching in all subjects. Severe budget restraint has prevented the co-ordinator from carrying out classroom observations or staff training in order to improve their confidence in RE. As a result standards at the end of key stage 2 are below average and are reflected in the pupils' varying levels of interest. At the end of key stage 1 the impact of the school's work can be seen and standards are at least satisfactory, children make good progress and are totally engaged with the subject.

#### **How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?**

There is good leadership and management of the school as a church school. The school is an integral part of the Church's mission in serving this challenging community. The headteacher, senior staff and governing body set their first priority as addressing the behavioural and emotional needs of individual children and families. The impact of this decision and the initiatives that followed has been to enable pupils in the school to make good progress. Parents now value the Christian ethos. Children can explain how forgiveness and reconciliation are celebrated and governors have reached a point where they have reviewed their vision statement in order to make it more overtly Christian. All this represents a significant achievement for the first two years in the life of this school. It has happened because the headteacher, the vicar and curate have a passionate and shared vision that has remained strong despite numerous difficulties. Together they enable the Church to have a real presence in the school through clergy and foundation governors leading worship, offering confirmation classes, leading an after school club and being members of the governing body. The clergy also work with the head to extend the

school's role in the community through the holiday club, Christmas lunch and Mothering Sunday service. The partnership with the Diocese is recognised as effective in supporting the aims of the school because of the regular and ongoing liaison with the Bishop, the Director of Premises and advisory team in the Schools department. The governors know what has promoted and what has constrained progress and the inclusion of targets for worship and RE in the development plan ensures that the distinctive church school ethos is part of regular self-evaluation.

SIAS report January 2006 The John Henry Newman Church of England Primary School  
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