

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Layston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Causeway,
Buntingford,
Hertfordshire
SG9 9EU

Diocese: St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 19 June 2006

Date of last inspection: 15 – 17 May 2000

School's Unique reference number: 117390

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Sherwood

Inspector's name and number: Lindsay Fraser

School context

Layston Church of England First School is a school of 140 pupils set in Buntingford, near Royston. There is a very small number of children from minority ethnic groups; most children are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and the proportion of children known to be entitled to free school meals are below average. No children speak English as a foreign language. The headteacher took up her post at the beginning of the year.

Summary Judgement

Layston First School is a good church school with some outstanding features. As a result of the clear vision of the headteacher and governors the school has a distinctive Church of England character, providing an ethos in which pupils and staff show care and respect for each other.

Established strengths

- The outstanding distinctive Christian vision of the Headteacher and foundation governors puts the children at the heart of all aspects of school life.
- The very strong Christian ethos enables all pupils to feel valued through the use of praise and the value attached to all their achievements.
- Parents and pupils are fully involved through the impact of questionnaires and the open door policy.

Focus for development

- Improve pupils' attitudes to Collective Worship through greater involvement of the pupils, the development of themes and time given to reflection.
- Increase the pupils' understanding of Christian values by involving them in the new behaviour policy.
- Improve the pupils' understanding of cultural diversity through greater links with other faiths and cultures.

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

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the need of all learners in a good way. Parents report that all children feel valued and that the needs of all children, regardless of ability, are met. Parents also state that the school is part of the family and the family is part of the school. Pupils feel valued and special because their views are listened to. For example, the views of the school council were taken into consideration when new playground equipment was ordered. Christian values can be seen in the good behaviour of the children and the responsibility which the older children show to the younger children. Children who may not normally choose to look after younger children are encouraged to be reading partners and to share hymn books. They state that they have enjoyed this experience and responsibility. The school makes a good impact upon the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children. Examples of children's spiritual development can be seen in the thoughtful prayers which they have written, a recipe written to make a better life based on the story of the Good Samaritan and their searching questions. Teachers provide very good role models for the pupils and all children feel confident that they are well supported by their teachers. Parents agree that children have full respect for all members of staff. Display is used to good effect, especially the altar and cross in the school hall and the display of newspaper reports of achievements in

the school entrance. The school aims and the school mission statement, which are based on Christian values, are also displayed in a prominent position.

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

The impact of Collective Worship upon the school is good. Worship is well planned and its developing themes take account of the Christian calendar. Following the parental questionnaire in which requests were made for more information about Collective Worship the school has now begun to inform parents of the themes to be developed. This is appreciated by parents. Many, but not all, pupils speak positively about Collective Worship and some parents report that their children do talk about what they have learned in Collective Worship. The atmosphere during worship is well supported by focal points and the pupils speak positively of the candle as an aid to concentration during prayer. Singing is of a good standard, but there is little time for reflection. Worship is seen as inclusive for those of other faiths and of no faith and pupils see this as important. Local clergy play an important and regular part in leading Collective Worship. The church is used for special times such as Harvest, Easter, Christmas and the Leavers' Service. Parents report that occasions when parents are invited to attend special acts of worship the attendance is phenomenal.

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

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school? The leadership and management of the school as a church school are good. This can be seen from the clear vision of the headteacher and foundation governors for the future development of the school. Governors have benefited from professional development provided by the diocese which has aided their understanding of the Christian distinctiveness of the Church School. The headteacher is committed to involving all members of the school community in developing the aims and ethos of the school, as seen in a recent meeting to discuss the school aims and mission statement. The views of the governors, parents and pupils have been sought and these have been acted upon. A newsletter to parents explained how the issues which they had raised were to be addressed. Parents describe enthusiastically the 'open door' policy which enabled all issues to be discussed with senior management. This ensures that there were no long standing issues. As part of its Christian ethos the school supports a number of charities such as NCH and the Pakistan earthquake appeal. The school is very popular and currently oversubscribed. Governors are involved in monitoring and evaluating areas of the curriculum and more thorough monitoring of Collective Worship is planned for the next academic year. Pupils are involved in the local community by distributing harvest gifts to local residents.

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