

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Little Gaddesden Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Road,
Little Gaddesden,
Berkhamsted,
HP4 1NX

Diocese: St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 24th February 2006

Date of last inspection:

School's Unique reference number: 117443

Headteacher: Charis Geoghegan

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field NS151

School context

This is a small school with three quarters of pupils coming from its village community. They represent a variety of backgrounds but fewer than average have special educational needs. There is a strong tradition of links with the Church. Over the last two years there has been a period of staff change and the new headteacher was appointed in April 2005 following two terms as acting headteacher.

Summary Judgement

This is a good church school that is strongly supported by the community it serves. The clear vision of the new headteacher is giving direction to its Christian ethos and the well rounded education it offers its pupils. Grade 2

Established strengths

- The Christian leadership and vision of the headteacher
- The support of parents, the village community and members of the Church congregation for the school
- The impact of work with charity organisations on the personal development of pupils

Focus for development

- To continue to implement the planned developments in RE to ensure consistently high standards across the school
- To explore how greater spiritual awareness can contribute to the personal development of pupils

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

This is a good school in meeting the needs of all learners, through its distinctive Christian character. Grade 2

In this school children learn in a nurturing environment that reflects Christian values. This is recognised by parents, governors and members of the community as a key strength of the school. It is more than just the quality of care provided by staff through a close knowledge of the children, it is the challenges posed to pupils to develop their sense of responsibility in society. This is central to the headteacher's vision for the school. At one level this happens through the school's involvement in charity work which is integrated into lessons and collective worship. At another level the care of older pupils for younger ones is part of the daily routines and enables children to settle easily into school. The self-esteem of pupils is nurtured through representing the school in local events and experiencing decision-making through the School Council. Good work and acts of kindness are recognised by Golden Awards. The moral and social development of pupils is, therefore, good but the quality of spiritual development is more variable. This is because there is not yet a consistent approach to reflective thinking and insufficient links are made between events in life and beliefs and values. Parents feel involved in their children's education and are confident the Christian ethos enables their children to flourish.

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

The worshipping experience provided makes a good impact on the school community. Grade 2

The themes chosen for worship reflect the school's aims and make a significant contribution to children's personal development. The headteacher provides termly

plans for worship using the Anglican Common Worship Lectionary as a framework and adds the school's work for local and world wide charities. This gives pupils a knowledge of the Christian faith through the festivals of the Church year but also develops their sense of responsibility to those less fortunate than themselves. Children say they feel the greatest impact from 'real people' - the visitors who lead worship such as a Buddhist monk who led a meditation. Children respect the atmosphere for worship and are keen to participate. They respond well to the yearly pattern of key services held in the church but place less value on daily worship in school. This is because they see it as another lesson and have not explored the special nature of worship and this limits their spiritual development. Parents really welcome the opportunity to attend class worship and services in church. They feel this helps them understand the values the school promotes and to be involved in the worshipping life of the school.

How effective is the religious education?

Religious Education is satisfactory overall. Grade 3
The headteacher has undertaken a major revision of the syllabus with the support of the Diocesan adviser. The new approach includes a close study of world faiths which gives a sense of wholeness to each religion. It also reflects the school's aim to prepare children for life in a more diverse society. In junior classes, RE tasks are practical, promote good learning and link to global issues. Standards are moving towards being above average but the ability of pupils to make connections between religious ideas is still limited by significant gaps in their previous knowledge. The children, however, feel that recent changes have rekindled their interest in the subject and have motivated them to work harder. In the lesson observed with Years 1 and 2 the quality of teaching and learning was good. This was because the structure and pace built understanding as the lesson progressed and made a significant contribution to their spiritual development. Children really enjoyed the lesson and made good use of their 'talking partners'. Unfortunately, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their books indicated very clearly that this does not reflect their usual experience of RE and in these year groups, standards are unsatisfactory. The school knows this is an urgent issue to be addressed. The governors support both the revision and the importance of RE in the school which is demonstrated by its inclusion in the School Development Plan.

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 is good. Grade 2
It is good because of the impact of the new headteacher in giving direction to what was already a very committed governing body. She has a clear and inspiring vision which is rooted in Christian values and in enabling these children to learn responsibility and awareness of the wider world. This has helped her to prioritise areas for development. Consequently, the focus on charity organisations and global issues in both RE and collective worship has made a significant impact on pupils. The school is an integral part of the village community and its Church foundation has always underpinned school life. The school benefits from the significant practical support of the community and children gain personally from taking part in public events. Unfortunately, there has been little clergy presence in the school for a number of years but it is hoped this situation is about to change. The school has compensated well by inviting visitors to lead worship and continuing to lead services in Church. The loyal support of members of the Church congregation and prayer group has provided good role models for the children. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate particularly as it involves children and parents in the process. The mixed response of pupils to both RE and collective worship has been recognised but has not yet addressed their inability to identify distinctly Christian aspects of the school. Parents, in contrast, are very clear about this. They describe how Christian values underpin behaviour and nurturing in the school and how children talk comfortably about God and faith.