

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Richard Hill Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

12 Anstey Lane,  
Thurcaston,  
Leicester.  
LE7 7JA

Diocese: **Leicester**

LA: Leicestershire

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006

Date of last inspection: May 2004

School's Unique reference number: 120205

Headteacher: Mr J. Sutcliffe (interim)

Inspector's name and number: Miss M. R. Matthews (95)

#### School context

The school is situated on the northern borders of Leicester and serves the villages of Thurcaston and Cropston. There are 187 pupils on roll, a third of whom come from out of area through parental choice. Few pupils are from an ethnic minority background. The school is highly valued and stands at the heart of the local community. It has withstood three difficult years with regard to the appointment of a permanent head teacher and now looks forward to being part of a federation alongside a neighbouring primary school.

#### Summary Judgement

Richard Hill School is a satisfactory church school with many good features and the capacity to improve. Its Christian ethos and collective worship are in need of development but religious education is good. The current leadership and management have made significant strides in improving confidence in the school and in raising standards. The strong links with the parish church and the local community provide good support for the school's Christian foundation.

#### Established strengths

- Renewed spirit of improvement under the interim leadership.
- Good attitudes and behaviour of learners.
- Good standard of teaching and learning in RE.
- Loyalty and support of parents.

#### Focus for development

- Provide INSET in conjunction with the diocese on collective worship and what it means to be a church aided school.
- Enable and encourage the new head teacher to develop the leadership and management of the school as a church school.
- Provide a budget for RE and collective worship.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and introduce a focus table for acts of worship in the hall.
- Encourage all staff to attend the act of worship each day.
- Rewrite and update the RE Policy, appropriate to an *aided* Church of England school.

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

The school meets the needs of all learners satisfactorily and in some instances very well. The school's Christian character today is a direct reflection of its foundation in 1715 by the then local vicar. This long history of Christian witness makes the school a special place: one that is valued and respected by parents and learners, even through difficult times, and attracts a real sense of loyalty from the community. Pupils speak well of their school; they feel valued as individuals and believe that the staff take good care of them. They are encouraged to flourish and succeed by a variety of rewards, which promote and affirm their achievements. Learners' know their views will be heard either through the 'Worry Box' or through the School Council, which shows a good measure of responsibility. Behaviour and attitudes are good because relationships throughout the school are warm and friendly, and centre on respect for each other. The school's ethos provides a sound Christian context for moral and social education: pupils are well aware of the needs of others and involve themselves in generous, charitable fund-raising events. Their own

personal interests and development are well met through a range of clubs and activities. Cultural development is satisfactory and improving, as is spiritual development, but insufficient time and direction is given to learners' private reflections in lessons and in collective worship. The school environment highlights the distinctiveness of the school with its Christian signs and related displays of children's work. Strong links with the parish church and the local community and the valued contribution of the parish priest all help to meet the needs of each member of the school, young or old. Pupils and staff value the school and what it stands for and believe it is a good school to attend.

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

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory. Further progress has not been made because this church aided school has lacked a permanent head teacher who could lead collective worship by example and personal conviction. There has been little formal evaluation of worship in recent years and no general in-service training. As a result, some staff are unaware of the principles which govern collective worship in a church school. The quality of worship is, however, at least satisfactory and, sometimes, very good. Themes are well planned by the co-ordinator, reflecting the church's year. Delivery is clear, gives good messages and is spiritually based. Learners behave very well and engage with the worship in a respectful manner. They are actively involved, particularly in reading out their own prayers or in role play, illustrating a story. The majority enjoy the worship and their level of interest is raised by a number of visiting speakers, including the vicar, who contribute regularly. Pupils' views on collective worship have been surveyed and changes are planned. There is a lack of Christian artefacts, which would provide a focal point for worship; nevertheless, in the classrooms, a special atmosphere is clearly evident owing to the excellent rapport between teachers and pupils. Teachers use gentle suggestion or hard challenge, with equal success, in raising pupils' spiritual awareness; for example, Reception children were transfixed by the poem 'Mothers' Love,' relating to Mothering Sunday, whilst key stage 2 children showed extreme concern for others when learning about mothers in the third world. Parents believe that worship has a beneficial effect upon their children. The attendance of all staff at collective worship would enhance the experience for everyone. The impact of music within worship is good; pupils sing and play well. Major Christian festivals are celebrated in the parish church and are very well supported by parents.

**How effective is the religious education?**

Religious education in the school is very effective. Learners make good progress over the year. They are able to speak with knowledge and interest about what they have learned and clearly enjoy the lessons. Standards of attainment are good because teachers are well prepared and have positive attitudes towards the subject. This enthuses the learners who respond well to the high levels of expectation and to the challenging and varied activities. Learners think seriously when replying to provocative questions, and this results in the expression of balanced, well-considered views. Most of the teaching is good; some is close to outstanding. Moral development is highlighted in the majority of lessons; spiritual development less so - although an older pupil, on listening to some faith music, was moved to remark, 'It makes you think of the passion of Christ.' RE occupies a prominent position in the school, largely as a result of the co-ordinator's enthusiasm. It has a full allocation of curriculum time and there are extensive, good quality displays of RE work throughout the school. The monitoring of RE lessons is, however, inadequate. Although multi-faith artifacts have been acquired recently, which greatly enhanced pupils' learning about the Jewish Passover, a regular budget is required so that improvements can be planned in the long term to accommodate the new Diocesan Syllabus.

**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 satisfactory, overall. In recent years there has been a lack of Christian vision to drive the school's development, as a church school. This has taken its toll

of consistent, inspirational leadership, which the school would expect, normally. The current, interim head teacher has, however, in a short time, turned morale around and achieved significant success in raising the school from its designated position of 'serious weakness' to a satisfactory, or better, level of performance. The school is now poised for the new, permanent head teacher to pursue and re-establish its Christian focus. Parents and governors appreciate, greatly, all that the interim head teacher has done in holding the school together. Governors are strongly committed to the school's Christian ethos. They are supportive and keen to see the school develop, but they are also sensitive to the pressures felt by staff whilst the school is in its current transitional stage. Governors will, in the future, need to address the issue of monitoring religious education and collective worship. Prayer has continued to be a regular feature of governors' meetings; and pupils say Grace at lunch times. The school community is aware of its Christian status and pupils give good explanations about what it means to them to attend a church school. Staff feel well supported by the leadership and many provide good Christian role models for learners. The school has a particularly appropriate Mission Statement which provides a very good foundation upon which to base pupil development at a church school. Of the ten points for action made in the previous Section 23 Report, five have been addressed. Of those remaining, the allocation of a budget for RE. and the provision of in-service training for staff are the most pressing. The school's first attempts at using the National Society's Self-evaluation Toolkit have been a success, because the judgements made are realistic and they indicate that the school has the capacity to improve.

SIAS report March 2006 Richard Hill Church of England (Aided) Primary School  
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