

Alconbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane
Alconbury
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE28 4EQ

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridge
Dates of inspection: May 16th and May 18th 2007
Date of last inspection: September 2002
School's unique reference number: 110809
Headteacher: Linda Dove
Inspector's name: Colette Firth

School context

Alconbury Church of England School is a slightly smaller than average primary school. Most pupils are from a White British background. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and those eligible for free school meals is below average. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is just below national expectations. The School has strong links with the local Church and the community

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Alconbury Church of England School as a Church of England school is Good.

The Christian values of respect and care are embedded throughout the school, which ensures there is a feeling of community. These values permeate school life, parents and children alike feel proud of their school. Through the teachings of Christianity the "Every Child Matters" agenda is a high priority in school and impacts on the outcomes for children, and as one child acknowledged "this makes the school strong".

Established strengths

- The school has a caring ethos, which is based on Christian values.
- There are good links between the church and school.
- Children and staff feel valued and appreciated.
- The school makes a significant contribution to raising money for charities.
- Relationships across the school are very good.

Focus for development

- To give pupils a greater opportunity to be actively involved in collective worship, including a role as worship leaders.
- To develop the environment in which Collective Worship takes place.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirement for Collective Worship and therefore needs to rectify this quickly.

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

The school values all pupils as individuals. Their gifts and talents are appreciated and celebrated by the school community. Pupils speak proudly about their school, they are articulate about what makes this school special, "we feel special here, safe...it's like a family". They can also articulate the nature of their school as a Christian school, and their belief that God keeps them safe in school.

Pupils describe the Staff as "...fair, encouraging, and they help us to do the right things"

The school's distinctive Christian character is particularly evident in the relationships between adults and pupils, which are good, with pupils clearly feeling safe, happy and cared for. Children show tolerance and empathy, this was particularly evident at playtimes: pupils pointed out a 'Friendship Stop' where children can go if they need a friend. Teachers make notes in the "Friendship Book" when pupils have been good friends at playtime and this reinforces the values to all children.

In one observed lesson there was a discussion about "who helps us to keep safe", pupils talked confidently about God and Jesus helping them to make the right choices. Other children in the class responded in a very positive way by talking about prayer as a conversation with God. This was a clear indicator that the Christian character of the school is well embedded and a significant part of their daily lives.

Pupils benefit from a strong link with the foundation governors, who are very active in school, organising music lessons and providing a living link to the local church community.

A clear strength of the school is that staff feel valued and nurtured. Staff talk enthusiastically about being part of the Christian community, and model the key Christian value of inclusion of all. The Head teacher is clearly the role model here;" she makes time for everyone, she believes everyone deserves time"

Individualism is celebrated and strengths utilised so that children have a wide range of experiences. Staff feel listened to and supported by the Senior Management Team. Staff talk about channels of support during the induction period and this staff induction deals effectively with Christian Collective Worship and promoting Christian ethos and values in the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is Satisfactory

Pupils are quiet and respectful in collective worship, which ensures an atmosphere of quiet reflection. Children sing beautifully and clearly enjoy this opportunity to speak to God, they say it is "good for God to hear us"

The main worship leader is the Head teacher, however all teaching staff participate in leading worship, they feel comfortable doing this and see this as an important part of the school life.

Pupils say that Collective Worship can have an impact on their lives. They were particularly inspired with hearing a story of a pelican, reflecting with staff on what it meant to them and how they could be more tolerant and forgiving in their own lives. During discussions with the children they expressed to the inspector a wish to become more actively involved in Collective Worship. They talked passionately about leading prayers and devising their own Worship. Pupils also talked about Worship being more interactive. They were clear about why they wanted this, and that creating more opportunities for engagement would "make it more exciting". Clearly Children at Alconbury feel ready to take a positive role in the ongoing development of Collective Worship, and the school is encouraged to further this.

The school benefits from the support of a number of different local people, both lay and ordained, who lead the school in Collective Worship and children thoroughly enjoy this input. This also enables the pupils to experience a wide variety of styles of Worship.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is multifaceted, parents and members of the wider community appreciate the regular invitations to join the school in Worship. They often take part in the celebration assembly or services in Church. Children positively commented that so many parents come to the services: "It makes them even more special."

The development of the school hall, as a place of Worship should be considered by the school, setting the right tone for Worship and also indicating a change in use from an assembly hall or dining hall to a place where the community meet to join in Collective Worship.

Collective Worship does not take place for all children every day; this means that this is a failure of the school to meet the statutory requirements on Collective Worship.

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

The school rightly sees itself as having good leadership and management. Governors and members of the leadership team speak confidently and clearly about the school's Christian vision. There are clearly shared values and much time is taken to reflect and share ideas.

There are effective pastoral and spiritual links between school, community and Church. The school and Church share resources, there is feedback to the PCC from the Governors of the school and traditions such as the Christingle are a natural part of the school's rhythm and "a time to connect to the community".

The well-attended services are a clear indicator of how effective these partnerships are. The Head is passionately proud of her school and this is reflected by the respect in which the community holds her and the school. The Leadership team listens carefully to the student council who also have a leadership role in school, deciding which charities to support and how they will do the fundraising.

The adults in the school are strong role models and work hard to develop the core values of the school for instance the relationships in the classrooms between adults, the way in which teachers and teaching assistants talk to one another.

Foundation governors are a positive presence in school; whilst working with children they are also a link to Church, so that children can make connections between the work happening in school and Church.

The Governors work collaboratively with the school, this ensures that the head feels supported, an example of this collaboration is the work the Curate is doing on supporting the performance management in the school.

Governors understand that a key area for development is the monitoring of Collective Worship and its effectiveness to ensure that it meets the statutory requirements and is of a good standard. Thus guaranteeing that all pupils benefit from high quality Christian Worship.