

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Alderbury & West Grimstead Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Firs Road,
Alderbury,
Salisbury
SP5 3BD

Diocese: Salisbury

Local authority: Wiltshire

Dates of inspection: 17th December 2007

Date of last inspection: June 2002

School's unique reference number: 126445

Headteacher: Mr Patrick Macey

Inspector's name and number: Mr A W G Rickett 201

School context

Alderbury & West Grimstead is an average size school with 184 children who come from the surrounding rural villages. The socio economic background is varied. Pupil mobility is high. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of children have a white British heritage.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Alderbury & West Grimstead CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good

Alderbury & West Grimstead is a school in which children are able to develop an appreciation that faith is a normal part of a person's life. Children are instilled with a sense that life contains many mysteries. The school effectively uses this approach to help provide them with opportunities in which they can flourish in both their learning and personal development.

Established strengths

- The very high quality of relationships throughout the school community.
- The emphasis placed on developing the whole child.
- The positive amount of support from governors and the community.

Focus for development

- Involve children in the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.
- Develop the governors' role in monitoring and evaluating the school's Christian ethos.
- Develop the depth of children's understanding of concepts in RE.

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

The strong impact which the Christian distinctiveness has on this school is reflected in the positive attitudes of the children towards their learning and in the way that they treat each other with great consideration. This comes from the good example set by adults and in the high expectations regarding behaviour and learning. In this way children are nurtured with great care and feel valued. This contributes to the school's vision that the teaching of the Gospels and Jesus' instruction on how to live life is gradually revealed to the children as they develop and progress through the school. As part of this, children are carefully guided through their lessons to explore their own feelings and appreciate how others feel. For example, some teachers were observed carefully developing the children's understanding by taking them through challenging concepts which gradually unfolded before them step by step. Relationships are very good and children know that they are valued as individuals. This gives them a very positive attitude towards school and allows them to thrive in their learning and

personal development. Standards therefore are high and children of all abilities make good progress. Children speak of school as a safe place where teachers listen to them and help them to do their best. Children speak openly and comfortably about their future and this positive outlook is a reflection of the way the school encourages children to understand that reconciliation will give them hope. A high proportion of children join the school part of the way through their primary education, but the fact that they settle so well is a sign of the very accepting nature of the children and the strength of the school ethos to ensure that it has a positive impact on all children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has improved significantly and is becoming more central to the life of the school. This has been in part achieved by the recent introduction of the 'Values for Life' programme and is already having an impact on the children. It has significantly raised the children's awareness of Christian values such as hope and thankfulness. Children talk thoughtfully about them and recognise how important they can be in their lives. Children have many opportunities to reflect throughout the day both in worship and in RE lessons and this helps to develop their spirituality especially as they are given definite guidance in how to reflect in a meaningful way. Participation of children in worship is very good. The formation of a children's worship committee is proving to be very effective. It is reflection of the school's aim to give children real responsibility by allowing them to take ownership of worship planning. Regular acts of worship are led by different classes and these are a valuable part of the school's worship pattern as they specifically relate to the current theme. Attitudes in general are good. Children understand that worship is a special time when the school comes together and hears about the way that Jesus taught us to lead our lives. They recognise that prayer is important and that it can have a powerful impact on those who have faith. Older children have a good understanding of prayer and know that prayers should come from the heart. Acts of worship contain clear messages and these are developed over several weeks, providing the opportunity to study them in greater depth. There is a very good range of visitors who enliven worship times, ensuring that children experience a wide variety of styles and creating the inclusive nature of the worship at this school. During the current interregnum, close links have been maintained with the local parish church which regularly provides visitors to lead worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in RE are good and compare favourably with other core subjects. Children of all abilities make good progress because teaching is regularly of a good standard. In these lessons, the children were encouraged to use their knowledge and challenged to reflect on how they might discover meaning for them and for others. In lessons where the teaching was very good, teachers skilfully guided the children step by step to explore and deepen their understanding of a concept. This was seen in one particularly successful lesson when the very youngest children were led through a lesson in which their understanding of the real meaning of Christmas was developed by careful yet probing questions from the teacher. The school has recognised that this is an area that they wish to develop even further. A strong element of each lesson is the time which is given for reflection. The children respond well to this because they are guided into considering what the main message of the lesson means to them personally. Attitudes are good because children like the way that they learn, using a wide variety of styles. For example, they enjoyed the challenge of interpreting the Christmas story through unfamiliar art and music. They respond well to this because they like discussing concepts that do not necessarily have straightforward answers. The school has a sensible approach to assessment of RE with a good balance between knowledge and skills and with sufficient evidence to identify the progress being made by each child. There is a clear progression of both knowledge and skills throughout the school.

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

The headteacher very effectively communicates the school's Christian message and how it can be interpreted at a level directly relevant and intelligible to the children. This means that children are able to develop a clear understanding of how Christian values can make an impact to their lives. He is an excellent role model to both children and adults and

successfully reflects how the school mission can be lived out at a practical level. Governors wholeheartedly support the school's mission and agree that the starting point for this stems from the example set by adults. They have a good grasp of the distinctiveness of a church school and are keen to develop this understanding further. Foundation governors in particular are very enthusiastic including the newly appointed governor with responsibility for worship and RE who is quickly establishing her role of working alongside the co-ordinator. The RE Co-ordinator is very effective and has made significant changes to both RE and collective worship and has been highly successful in raising their profile within the school. She has a clear grasp of how to take the subject forward and can articulate a personal philosophy for RE which places it at the centre of a child's spiritual development. Even though the parish church is in an interregnum, links between it and the school are good. There are very positive links with worship teams who regularly lead acts of worship and the PCC receives regular reports about the school's progress. The local church is some distance away from the school and both communities are keen to look at ways to strengthen their spiritual bonds. Parents are very supportive of the school and agree that it is good that the school can openly celebrate its Christian character. They say that the school is welcoming and that staff are approachable. Children feel safe and secure in an environment in which they can learn and feel that they are succeeding.

SIAS report December 2007 Alderbury & West Grimstead CE VA, Salisbury SP5
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