

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Ascot Heath Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Rhododendron Walk

New Road

Ascot

SL5 8PN

Diocese of Oxford

LEA: Bracknell Forest

Dates of inspection: 27th September 2006

Date of last inspection: W/B 8th May 2000

School's Unique reference number: 109985

Name of Headteacher; Mrs J Graham

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Mrs. G. M. Ringrose

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ascot Heath Junior as a Church of England school are good

Ascot Heath Junior is a good school with many outstanding features. The impact of the clearly defined Christian spiritual, moral and social values promoted throughout the daily life of the school enhance the distinctiveness of this popular Church of England Junior school.

Established strengths

- Strong, effective leadership by the Headteacher combined with a supportive Governing Body.
- Good practice shared and utilised between members of the staff team resulting in a creative curriculum within which children enjoy and achieve.
- Confident, articulate children who are proud of their school.
- Positive home/school liaison.
- High level of interaction between the Parish and the school.

Focus for development

- To further promote the distinctiveness of Ascot Heath Junior as a Church school, by creating a more visual Christian focal point in the vestibule and school hall.

Ascot Heath Junior School, through its distinctive Christian character makes outstanding provision to meet the needs of all its learners.

From talking with the children, it is evident that they enjoy coming to school and that their teachers make learning fun. The transfer from Infant to Junior levels is made smoothly because of an established 'Buddy system' which ensures older pupils befriend a new entrant. Some of these friendships have continued into the next stage of the children's education. Older pupils also are trained to act as Peer Mediators at playtimes and take this role very seriously. These responsibilities entrusted to the children are evidence of the importance the school gives to the spiritual, moral and social education of each child. The excellent examples set by the staff and older pupils ensure that the high standards of behaviour and the ethos of a caring community continue from year to year. Children are also secure in the knowledge that they can speak with any member of staff when they need help. From the two RE lessons observed it is evident that children are encouraged to share their opinions, to become confident when speaking in a group and to work independently. The importance of making lessons relevant to the particular age group is evident from the artefacts provided and the questioning used. The RE Coordinator appointed this term, has begun a review of the whole school rolling programme, linking it with the implementation of the new Agreed Syllabus thus ensuring the children will continue to receive a range of rich and varied experiences. The importance given to RE is also evident from its inclusion in the School Development Plan and displays around the school. From speaking with parents, they are confident that each child is valued, because the school recognises that 'each child is good at something' and all will receive an award. They appreciate the school's 'Open Door' policy, approachable staff and excellent communication through newsletters and the school's website. Parents were also full of praise for the way the school and the local church helped children, and families, to cope with the recent sudden death of a popular young teacher.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good with effective consultation and planning undertaken by both the school and the local church.

From discussion with the children it is evident that they enjoy the variety of leadership styles they experience during Collective Worship and take lessons learned with them into the school day. The act of worship observed, with the theme 'sport and success' emphasised staff team work and the importance attached to making the content relevant and up to date for the children. The song chosen, had a clear message and the tuneful singing by the upper school children encouraged those in the lower school to join in confidently with the repeats. Candles are lit whilst listening to a radio assembly, but a focal point to define the act of worship is not used on every occasion. Periods of reflection take place, although not in all assemblies but children are very aware of the importance of prayer, especially The Lord's Prayer. Parents made particular reference to the prayer tree and memory wall established in the Library which were a great source of strength to many people in the days following the death of the young teacher. All staff attend assemblies and this impacts favourably on the effect of Collective Worship on the whole school community by ensuring that children understand the importance given to worship within the daily life of the school. A weekly act of worship, planned following discussion with the Headteacher, is led by the Church Warden of All Saints and children also participate in a Family Service at the Church. These, combined with the school communion service held in the summer term, encourage coherence between worship in school and the practice of worship in the parish. Although there are few children from other faith backgrounds, stories from various religions and cultures are told in assemblies with relevant children sharing their experiences of specific ceremonies associated with their faith. This, combined with visits to places of worship other than the local church, helps to promote a greater understanding of other faiths and to prepare the children for life in a multi cultural society. The right of parents to withdraw their children from Collective Worship and RE is clearly published in the school prospectus.

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

The Headteacher and Governors work in close partnership with the local church to provide overall good leadership and management of Ascot Heath Junior as a church school. From observing the school at work, it is evident the good leadership and management skills and caring attitude of the Headteacher sets an example which is followed by the whole of the staff team. The way in which all staff work together and respect each other also provides a positive example for the children. Teaching assistants are used effectively to work alongside the class teachers or with a small groups providing high quality support for children with learning or behavioural difficulties. The children raise issues through the School Council and a children's questionnaire, secure in the knowledge that, where feasible, changes or improvements will be made as happened when more equipment was made available at playtimes. Governors support the Headteacher and staff in monitoring and developing the Christian dimension of the whole school. Following the Headteacher's attendance at a Diocesan Conference, the Governors discussed the characteristics of a Church school and the impact of the findings on their own school. Valuable support has also been given by the school's Diocesan Advisor. There are well established links between the local church and the school with church members and foundation governors attending school events and providing both practical and moral support. The Parents' Association provides a Lent lunch at All Saints, whilst the school raises funds for a Lent project such as a school for disabled children in Uganda. A new wild area has been developed through sponsorship obtained from HBSC by an ex parent thus encouraging the children's sense of awe and wonder as was evident whilst being taken on a tour of the school. There are very good relationships with the Infant school which occupies the same site although they do not have a church foundation. There are similar links with the secondary schools into which the children feed. Involvement with the wider community is also ensured as children contribute articles for the Parish magazine, distribute Harvest boxes and support charities such as Operation Christmas Child.