

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Ashbury with Compton Beauchamp Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Ashbury
Swindon
SN6 8LN

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 5 March 2008

Date of last inspection: 2004 (no other details)

School's Unique reference number: 123220

Name of Headteacher: Miss Marcia Northeast

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Mrs Mari Powell 143

Context

The school admits pupils from several local villages. Pupils have the potential to make good progress and come from families who are very supportive of their children's education. The school after a very stable past has experienced a very unsettled period since the last inspection in 2004. There have been six changes of either acting headteacher or headteacher. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2008. It is already very clear that the school is now moving forward very confidently.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashbury with Compton Beauchamp as a Church of England school are satisfactory

The school has a clear vision of itself as a well established church school. After a period of uncertainty, the school's mission "we care" is beginning to be articulated more confidently to include raising self-esteem through academic achievement. At the same time, support for the pupils' personal development continues to strengthen.

Established strengths

- The fresh insight provided by the headteacher and fully supported by the governors and staff.
- The enthusiastic response of pupils to increased opportunities for their voices to be heard.
- The support of parents and members of local churches.

Focus for development

- Improving planning, assessment and monitoring of religious education.
- Ensuring that all areas of the indoor environment match the excellence of some which already exist and contribute fully to raising standards and also to supporting pupils' independent learning skills.

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

Members of the school are proud of their church school status. This is reflected in the many Christian symbols inside and outside the school, for example, in the quiet garden. The school is orderly. Children feel safe and valued. There is a growing impetus for consulting the children through dialogue and questionnaires. Their spiritual and moral development is increasingly enriched through worship and the promotion of good relationships. Pupils are trusted and valued. As assessment procedures, for example, in the teaching of religious education, become more focused and work becomes more appropriately challenging, pupils' self-esteem grows in relation to their academic development. Recent initiatives to support the Christian vision of the school include eye catching and aesthetic displays to reflect the Easter message and provide a striking setting for school worship. The pupils are eagerly anticipating the celebration of Easter by following the Holy Trail which has been set up. Parents and other members of the community comment on how welcoming and embracing the school is.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is central to the communication and promotion of the school's Christian character. A good partnership between the school and members of the local clergy ensures that themes are well planned and reflect the Anglican foundation of the school. The new headteacher appropriately identifies the potential for seizing opportunities from the broader curriculum to further enrich the pupils' experiences. Multifaith elements have also engaged the pupils' interest and promoted discussion. Just recently a valuable link with the local church has enabled the school to create a trail for Holy Week. It provides visitors and pupils with an exceptional focus for reflection during the school day. Parents say that they enjoy attending worship and being part of the school worshipping family. One parent expressed the view that worship was permeated "by an overwhelming sense of love". Learning, reciting and singing prayers is a well-established tradition which contributes well to pupils' spiritual development. The festivals of the church year are regularly celebrated either in St Mary's church or in the school. These are seen as opportunities for members of the community to share. Members of the church together with the headteacher and staff thoughtfully provided posies for the children to present to mothers during their recent Mothers' Day celebration. The school welcomes the village pre-school group to attend periods of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The school has appropriately identified the need to review aspects of teaching and learning in religious education. The school sees this subject as an important aspect of learning in a church school. The headteacher and coordinator have included its review in the revised School Improvement Plan. They are focusing their review on standards, assessment and evaluation through monitoring. Other priorities in the school have hitherto held back the pace of revision but it is now receiving the enthusiastic support of all the staff with the result that plans and recorded work are clearly improving in quality. The children have a sound knowledge of biblical stories. As a result of identifying a more interesting range of resources and improved questioning techniques, the older pupils in particular are developing a curiosity about the application of religious concepts to their own lives. A good example was seen when the oldest class had been considering "hopes and dreams". The presentation of work is also improving as pupils' interest levels develop, together with pride in their work.

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

After a period of some turbulence, the recently appointed headteacher has made a sharp and accurate analysis of areas where the school needs to develop. It is to the credit of the governors, who are very dedicated in their support of the school, that a satisfactory level of provision has been maintained. The staff are wholly supportive of the identified way forward because they have been fully consulted and their suggestions valued. The headteacher and staff fully recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the planning of lessons, for example, in religious education, and to make accurate assessments of children's progress. A programme has already begun, and includes governors, to enable them to fulfil their strategic role as very supportive "critical" friends. Governors attend worship and are developing a clearer focus on the impact of worship on the pupils. Since her appointment the headteacher's impact upon the vision and practice of the school is highly effective. The capacity of the headteacher and governors to fully realise and communicate their aspirations for the school as a distinctive church school is very high. The partnership is beginning to reflect confidently the Christian aims and vision that they all share.