

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Ashton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Road Hill,
Ashton,
Northants
NN7 2JH

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Northamptonshire

Dates of inspection: 5th July 2007

Date of last inspection: 25th - 28th February 2003

School's unique reference number:121957

Headteacher: Mr Simon Blight

Inspector's name and number: Anne Spence 315

School context

This primary school is a very small village school with 28 children on roll from 18 families; the number on role will increase to 33 in September 07. This number will remain stable for the next few years. 35% of the pupils are on the Special Needs register. A building programme is taking place; this will enhance the provision, providing much needed extra space for the Foundation Stage, staff and storage.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashton Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

An atmosphere of care, support and concern for others is evident throughout the school; this is based on the Christian values of kindness, honesty, respectfulness and forgiveness. The head teacher has been in post for almost two years and shows a desire for continuous improvement. There are close links between the church and the community which establish the school as an integral part of village life.

Established strengths

- A caring school built on a Christian foundation.
- Positive relationships between all stakeholders enabled by the size of the school and its 'family' nature
- Strong links with the community and local parish church.

Focus for development

- Establish a more structured and formal approach to monitoring and evaluating by the governors of Collective Worship and what it means to be a church school with an Anglican foundation.
- Complete the revision of the school mission statement ensuring that it contains reference to the Christian and Anglican foundation of the school.
- Further enhance the school environment to make it evident that Ashton School is a Church of England School.

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

A good family atmosphere exists throughout the school where care and support of others is uppermost and children feel special and valued. This was confirmed in a recent questionnaire to parents on the religious character of the school; the parents confirmed that the school is a caring school built on a Christian foundation. The children feel that they are valued and that they are lucky to be in a small school. They said that problems and worries are quickly and fairly dealt with. When asked if there was anything they would like to change the majority agreed that they were very happy and love the school. The provision for Special Needs is good and some parents choose the school for this aspect. The school has strong links with the local parish church and the community; the church is used as a resource to enhance the

teaching in Religious Education. Pictures were displayed of a visit to the church by the Foundation stage and Key Stage one pupils; the Rev Mike Burton, the local rector, gave the children a practical introduction to infant baptism through role play. The parents feel that the school extends into the community and that the village is always involved in school events, many of which are held in the grounds of the local public house. The links with the community are further strengthened by the groups that use the school hall including the Mums and Tots group who meet there every Thursday. The hall was provided by local benefactors and this also confirms the importance of the school to the community. The link with the church is highly visible at services on special occasions when some of the children take part; many families attend the family service and children attend Sunday school. A foundation governor remarked that the children are always well behaved and know the rituals of an Anglican service. The children's spiritual, moral and social development is well catered for in the environs of this very small school; the parents feel that the school offers good spiritual and moral guidance and the children through the writing of prayers and psalms show that their spiritual awareness is developing. The children are aware of the needs of others and this is evidenced by the charities they support and the way they independently organise events and publicity for these charities, a powerpoint presentation produced by the pupils is being used by a church in another village. There awareness of other cultures is enhanced by the provision in RE lesson and Collective Worship. The children spoke confidently about the beliefs and traditions of Judaism and Sikhism and displays around the school focused on these two religions, there is evidence of the teaching of other cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

The recently revised Collective Worship policy clearly defines the purpose of Collective Worship (June '07). The school believes that Worship can be defined as 'Loving God in the presence of one another; and loving one another in the presence of God' (Betty Pulkingham). The Rev Mike Burton worked with the head to revise the policy. The Collective Worship plan is comprehensive and covers many topics including, Christianity, God's World, Celebrations of other faiths and story teaching based on the Bible. All staff attend worship. The act of Worship observed focused on God's will through the story of Noah; the children entered the hall in a quiet orderly manner. The worship began with a pupil reading a passage from Proverbs chapter 3, the story of Noah was illustrated with pictures which kept all the children involved. There was a time for reflection when the children were asked to think about what it would be like in the ark. The children responded by asking questions relating to the story. It was emphasised that Noah had followed the will of God even though the task seemed impossible. A candle is lit and burns throughout worship. In the act of worship I observed no reference was made to the candle and its significance, the children showed that they understand the meaning of the candle but more direct mention of it will enhance their understanding. The parents commented that the children often discuss topics raised in worship at home and they value these discussions, this shows that Collective worship has an impact on their lives. They also said that they enjoy meeting together for worship and welcome the opportunity to choose hymns and music related to the theme. They were eager to show me the prayers and psalms they had written, these are often used in Collective Worship. The use of the local church for worship is limited and a more frequent use will enhance the children's understanding of the Anglican foundation of the school. The head teacher feels that the spiritual development of the children is supported in worship through their response to the teachings through Bible stories, the focus on major events, their understanding of something greater, the development of faith in themselves and the fact that they feel secure and are happy to take risks. The Lord's prayer is said once a week and there is evidence that acts of Worship have focused on the Lord's Prayer. Several people lead worship including, other members of staff, Rev Mike Burton, the Bishop's Visitor, a Christian ventriloquist and representatives from various charities. The children prepare the hall for worship and but their involvement in leading parts of the worship is limited, the head teacher acknowledges that this is an area for development and would like to work towards the children leading and managing an assembly on a regular basis. The monitoring of Collective Worship is on an informal basis, in a small school the pupils talk freely with adults and it is possible to assess the impact of worship through these discussions. A foundation governor has monitored collective worship and reported back to the governors, she intends to do this on a regular basis. A more structured approach will lead to a more effective monitoring and evaluation.

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

The head teacher has a clear vision for the future of the school and it is through this vision that the number on role is increasing; he is well supported by the chair of governors and the whole governing body, many are regular visitors to the school especially the chair and foundation governors. A family spirit, supported by Christian principles, pervades all aspects of school life and the size of the school enables everyone to take part in decision making. The staff and pupils work together to maintain a friendly and welcoming environment. The children and parents feel they are listened to and that their suggestions are taken into consideration. Parent views are sometimes sought through questionnaires; a recent one on the religious character of the school returned a very positive result. Parents speak favourably about the Christian ethos of the school and they value the way the children support each other. All prospective parents are made aware of the school's Christian nature and that behaviour and worship are underpinned by a Christian Ethos and Christian practices. To compensate for the size of the school the head has created links with other schools in the cluster to share resources. The school has links with Stoke Bruerne primary and a joint residential trip is planned. The school mission statement, whilst referring to the link with the local church, needs to be reviewed to reflect the Christian and Anglican foundation of the school. A regular review of the school's distinctive Christian nature and character by the governors will ensure that the good provision is maintained and an implementation of 'in house' training, as suggested by the chair of governors, on monitoring and evaluation will make it more effective. The size of the school building and the lack of a proper entrance hall restrict the ability to create a welcoming and Christian entrance to the school. An improvement in the school environment both inside and outside will strengthen the Christian and Anglican foundation of the school.

Ashton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Roade Hill, Ashton,
Northants NN7 2JH July 2007