

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Astbury St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

School Lane  
Astbury  
Congleton  
Cheshire  
CW12 4RG

#### **Diocese: Chester**

Local authority: Cheshire  
Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008  
Date of last inspection: 29<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2004  
School's unique reference number: 111333  
Headteacher: Mrs Jenny Wagstaffe  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Kay Leighton 547

#### **School context**

This is a smaller than average primary school situated in the village of Astbury. Most children are of white British heritage with a small number from minority ethnic groups who speak fluent English. Attainment levels on entry are generally above average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is below average. Children taking a free school meal are also below average. The school has been awarded Activemark. There has been considerable staffing disruption over a period of years, which has now been resolved since the appointment of the present headteacher.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Astbury St Mary's as a Church of England school are good**

A well-ordered school environment, underpinned by Christian values, gives the school a distinctive ethos. Positive relationships amongst children, their families, staff and governors ensure a warm and caring atmosphere. The whole school community are aware of the Christian nature of the school and consider it to be an important part of the school's success. Parents and governors are very supportive and involved in the life of the school.

#### **Established strengths**

- The hard work and dedication of the entire leadership team.
- The innovative and creative methods used in the teaching of religious education.
- The care for the children

#### **Focus for development**

- To formalise the governors' role in monitoring and evaluating the school's Christian distinctiveness.

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

Children say that are happy to come to school and enjoy the activities and friendly atmosphere. They feel that their views are well represented through the schools council and that teachers are approachable and will help them solve any problems. Levels of self esteem are high and the children feel that they belong to a good school where they are safe and will be given all the help they need. Children can confidently talk about their own Christian beliefs, attitudes and values. They are aware of how these values have evolved reflecting the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children. Relationships throughout the school are good and standards of behaviour around school and in lessons are high. Staff and pupils care for all new children; this is a good inclusive school. The Christian ethos is made explicit throughout school with high quality displays of resources and artwork

that emphasise the celebration of their church school status and has a very good impact on the spiritual development of the children.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Worship is very important to the life of this school. The headteacher and assistant head teacher have raised its profile by attending training to ensure their expertise in planning distinctly Christian worship. All staff lead worship and training for them has also been prioritised this year to further develop the impact of worship within the whole school community. A variety of styles of worship are planned including those that invite specific guests. Grandparents were very appreciative of their invitation to attend worship. Roundabout worship has also been developed in which teachers lead worship in a different class each week. It was highlighted by the children in their recent evaluation of worship as being particularly popular because they enjoy the variety and meeting a range of teachers. It also makes them feel part of the whole school community. The shared experience helps all children and staff to get to know one another and build a worshipping community which values and respects each other and their beliefs. The rector and the church are regularly used as a valuable resource to help the children learn about Anglican worship and beliefs and its teachings are regularly planned into his weekly input into school worship. Children attended on Ash Wednesday when the significance of the day was explained. It also gave another opportunity to familiarise the children with the church building as part of this terms study of the church. This visit and the others that the children discussed with enthusiasm has had a very good impact on their spiritual development.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

Standards in religious education are broadly in line with the core subjects. This judgement is based on teacher assessment and also assessment using 'can do' statements. This method of gauging pupils understanding is at an early stage and not yet embedded into the procedures of the school. Monitoring of lessons is also under developed. Lessons observed were good and effectively engaged all pupils by using a range of creative activities planned to match their ability. The group work involved using the pupils' excellent communication, computer, design and artistic skills making a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The scheme of work for RE highlights other SMSC opportunities. During the lessons the children cooperated with each other, behaved well and enjoyed the variety of interesting and creative teaching strategies planned. The lessons increased their learning about the church. Visits and visitors from other local churches are used in worship and RE to promote the distinctive Christian character of the school. The study of Hinduism and Judaism gives a good understanding of other faiths. RE is regarded as a very important part of school life by all staff and governors. Its priority is recognised by the fact that the assistant headteacher is the coordinator whose excellent subject knowledge and diligence has ensured that the planned teaching and learning and resources to support RE are very good.

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

The headteacher, staff and foundation governors articulate a clear Christian vision for the school. They provide excellent leadership and work in effective partnership to promote the distinctively Christian ethos. All staff are valued by the children, parents, leadership team and governors. Everyone gives special mention to the excellence and dedication of the cook. All members of the school community are justly proud of their school and work very hard to ensure excellent standards in all areas. This has been achieved through the hard work and dedication of the headteacher. She has created an environment rich in Christian ethos and values that children, parents and governors value greatly. New staff are chosen carefully and supported in putting the vision into practical action. Parents and pupils' involvement in monitoring the progress of the school is recorded in regular questionnaires. However the governors do not have formal strategies in place to monitor progress in achieving this vision.