

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Basildon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Beckfords,
Upper Basildon,
Reading,
Berkshire
RG8 8PD

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: West Berkshire

Dates of inspection: 25th June 2008

Date of last inspection: 12th October 2004

School's Unique reference number: 109949

Name of Headteacher: Miss Margaret Richardson

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Pauline Stanton-Saringer 561

Context

This is a small primary school which has seen growth in numbers over the last few years. It is some distance from the Parish Church. The pupils are predominantly from a white British background. There are an above average number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Indeed, some such pupils have transferred to the school because of its good provision.

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

The school is a happy, enthusiastic, inclusive, caring community whose life is securely based on Christian values and which has good links with the parish church. The head teacher gives a clear, consistent lead in maintaining these values. The school enjoys very positive support from staff, governors and parents. There is very good provision for the needs of all learners and they speak highly of their school.

Established strengths

- The vision of the Headteacher for the school as a church school which has built a positive caring community
- The strong support of staff, governors and parents which encourages development and progress
- The confidence, enjoyment and enthusiasm of pupils in their daily school life.

Focus for development

- The monitoring and evaluating role of the Foundation governors especially in relation to collective worship.
- Creating a clear church school focus in the entry foyer.

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

Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school, using words like "exciting, brilliant, friendly, safe, fun". All the feedback from the pupils indicates that they feel valued as individual people. The pupils have an air of confidence and openness which comes from being in a secure, supportive environment. They are good at listening to one another and valuing each other's opinion. There is a School Creed displayed in each classroom which summarises the school's Christian based aim to be inclusive and to value everyone. One pupil said that reading it helped him to think about how to treat others. Standards of attainment are above average and the school makes good provision

for both ends of the special needs spectrum. There is also a varied range of clubs and other activities which the pupils enjoy. The rich curriculum and the good use of classroom displays all contribute to the “buzz” of school life where pupils feel involved and say they look forward to coming to school each day. Pupils are supportive of classmates with learning difficulties.

There are good opportunities for spiritual development in the school day. The classrooms have a “quiet area” providing a focus for reflection; circle times are well used to underline the school’s Christian values. In religious education the year 4/5 have produced imaginative artwork to interpret a Sikh poem and most were able fluently to discuss the idea of “spirituality”.

Achievement in all areas of school life is celebrated in a variety of ways. The pupils find this very encouraging and it contributes to the positive attitude in school. There is a good use of Christian symbols around the school and some classrooms have prayer boards that are actively used by the pupils. In the school foyer the “church school” impact tends to be swamped by other displays.

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

The Headteacher plans carefully to keep worship fresh and relevant. Feed back from pupils is used to inform the planning. Good use is made of audiovisuals (operated by pupils) and there is an attentive, responsive atmosphere in worship. Pupils were able to talk clearly about recent examples of worship and said they liked the opportunity for quiet thought and reflection. They consider worship and prayer to be a natural and important part of school life. It is quite usual for a pupil to volunteer to lead a prayer during the worship either in whole school or class worship. Song versions of the Lord’s Prayer are used, but only some of the pupils would know the full words by heart. There is an expectation that staff will attend whole school worship and most do. In conversations with the Headteacher, pupils have said how worship themes made them think, for example, about the importance of telling the truth and about heaven linked with remembering family members who had died. After careful consideration it was decided that the incumbent should not lead worship every week, but have a broader role in school: leading a lunch time Christian based club and going on year 5/6 residential activities. This has enabled the pupils to get to know him better and opened up opportunities for pastoral work. The existing links between church and school are being strengthened by a new termly Sunday service held in the school hall, these are led by the incumbent. The first of these was well attended both by church members and school families. The school is not very close to the church, but some special celebrations are held there. The highlight of the year is the Easter Parade during which the whole school walks to church in costume acting out the Easter story. This brings the story to life for everyone. The governors are not yet active in monitoring the collective worship, but this is an action on the school development plan.

Worship together is at the heart of the school community and plays an important part in maintaining the Christian values and actions of that community.

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

The Headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school. This is strongly supported by the incumbent and the governors and is clearly stated in the school’s documentation. The Headteacher maintains good links with the diocese. As a SIAS inspector she keeps abreast of good practice in church school life. The new foundation governors are increasingly aware of their church school responsibilities through diocesan and other training. They recognise their need to monitor and have plans to implement this. Staff, parents and pupils all contribute feedback to the Headteacher and governors via questionnaires and consultations. All contributions are valued and used to inform planning. For example, recent revisions were made to the Religious Education scheme of work and these resulted in a more positive pupil attitude to the subject.

The School Development Plan includes actions designed to improve the church school ethos to reach specific targets. These actions are being carried out as part of an ongoing process.

Parents are very clear about the distinctiveness of a church school. They speak of its “peaceful ethos”, “morality” and “feeling of respect”. They give good support to the Sharing Assemblies and the special services in school and church. The links with the parish church are good and have been strengthened by the present incumbent. As described above, he has a developing pastoral

role in school as well as leading combined church/school worship. The church also supports the school in prayer and financially.

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