

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Blakesley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Green
Blakesley
Towcester
NN12 8RD

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Northamptonshire
Dates of inspection: 12th January 2009
Date of last inspection: 1st – 7th October 2004
School's unique reference number: 121959
Headteacher: Mary Barnett
Inspector's name and number: Anne Spence 315

School context

This is a rural primary school with 91 children on roll. The pupils come from a wide catchment area which includes the six villages from five parishes in the Lambfold benefice; a third of the pupils come from outside this catchment area. 16% of the pupils are on the Special Educational Needs register. The head teacher has been in post since September 2007.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blakesley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

An atmosphere of Christian care and concern is evident throughout the school. The children respect each other and learn about the significance of God and Jesus in their lives. There are very strong links with the local church which help the children understand the Anglican foundation of the school. The parents are very supportive and appreciate the total inclusiveness of the school.

Established strengths

- The very strong links with the church and local community.
- The pervading atmosphere of care and concern and happiness.
- The contribution made by religious education (RE) and collective worship to the spiritual development of all pupils.

Focus for development

- To ensure that the vision and values statement is consistently used in all school documents and occupies a prominent place in the school prospectus.
- To ensure that the school environment clearly proclaims the Christian status and Anglican foundation of the school
- To put in place systems to formally evaluate collective worship and the effectiveness of the school as a Church of England school

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

The vision and values statement was reviewed by the head teacher and school governors and confirms the Church of England status of the school and the Christian principles that it promotes. The parents confirmed that there is a totally inclusive ethos in the school. The children commented that everyone wants to be friends and that people are kind to one another; they find the teachers helpful and friendly. There is a 'buddy bench' in the school playground and this helps the children appreciate the needs of others in the school and give them support. The school has an active school council which the children say helps them to continue to make the school a better and exciting place and the parents consider that problems are solved by the children for the children. The school has a Christian 'fresh start'

approach to wrongdoings and the children appreciated being involved in the production of a code of practice for behaviour which encourages Christian values. The parents appreciate the 'open door' policy and value the opportunity to help in school. Learning about other faiths is supported by teaching in RE and collective worship and the school actively seeks to give the children opportunities to appreciate the diversity of other cultures. The school supports many charities locally and internationally; a group of children from Chernobyl make an annual visit to the school and a young girl in India is sponsored by the children. The parents commented that this enables the children to be more aware of other cultures and a greater understanding makes them more tolerant; the children said that learning about other cultures helps them to understand what other people believe in. The local vicar, Father John Hall, is a frequent visitor to the school and sees his role like that of a chaplain. The parents feel that the strong presence of Father John confirms the Christian nature of the school and that the children benefit greatly from the good relationship with him, this also makes a contribution to the children's spiritual development. The children feel 'comfortable' in the church environment and know what to do when attending church services. The school uses the church and other sacred buildings to enrich the teaching in RE; a lesson on the artefacts used in an Anglican church will be followed up with a visit to the local church. Prayer plays an important part in the daily life of the school; prayers are said at lunch time and at the end of the school day. Standards in RE are in line with those in other subjects. In an RE lesson year R children were able to recite the prayers used and also helped to identify the different aspects of prayer; the resulting work showed their understanding of what to pray for. An intention tree and wishes for 2009 display encourage the children to comment on issues that concern them and many children commented on the need to pray for peace. There is evidence of the Christian character of the school in most classrooms. A display of what the children think Jesus looked like by year 3 and 4 showed a diversity of interpretation and understanding. A stronger emphasis on the Christian character and its Anglican foundation in displays at the school entrance and general areas will confirm to all the nature of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The collective worship policy clearly states the aims and purpose of collective worship and the act of worship observed fulfilled these aims. The act of worship observed began with the bidding 'The Lord be with you' and the children responded 'and also with you'. The children were responsive and eager to answer questions. There was a time for reflection where the children were encouraged to think about the true meaning of the story they had heard and how it was relevant to their lives. The children like to be involved in assembly and carry out the routine tasks efficiently; it is the intention of the head teacher to implement a greater involvement. The head teacher keeps a record of all acts of worship and this confirmed that themes are taken from the teachings of Christ and the traditions of the Christian faith and from other religious traditions. The children are given the opportunity to make comments though informal conversations and often this indicates the long term impact of an assembly; the head teacher acknowledges that a more formal evaluation of worship will aid its development. Assembly always includes collective worship which the children understand is a time when they can learn about God and Jesus and is also a time when they can talk to God through prayer. The Lord's prayer is used on most days and the children understand that it is the prayer that Jesus taught us and that it can be found in the Bible. Prayers in assembly also focus on the needs of the school and wider community and the children are able to relate to these prayers and those in need. The school uses the local church for festival services and on other special occasions. Pupils from the school are members of the church youth choir and also the school choir which is beneficial to both groups. Father John leads worship once a fortnight and the children and parents commented that they really enjoy Father John's visit. The children were able to recall the content of his assemblies and said that many focus on the stories of Jesus and how they relate to our lives. There is a table in the hall for the cross and the candle; in the RE lesson this was referred to as the school altar. The children understand that the candle tells us that Jesus is the light of the world and that it reminds us to think about Jesus. They recalled that they had been presented with the candle at last year's Candlemas service. All members of staff attend assembly and lead worship, worship is also led by the curate and members of other denominations and some charities.

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

The Anglican foundation of the school is clearly stated in the recently revised vision and aims statement. The head teacher is a practising Christian within the community and promotes Christian values within the school. All school staff promote a Christian vision particularly through their relationships with the children, parents and each other and also in their teaching in RE and collective worship. The governors are very supportive of the school and all governors meetings begin with a prayer. They visit the school on a rota basis, each visit has a focus and a written report is presented to the governors. The governors provide an annual end of year report for parents. The foundation governors are regular visitors and consider there is an intimacy of connection between the church and the school. The governing body regularly review the ethos of the school and its vision and values and the school self evaluation is of sound quality. Father John provides support for the whole school community. The school has strong links with the churches in the Lambfold benefice and a virtual prayer group offers prayerful support to the school; this support is valued particularly when the school is experiencing difficult times. Church members regularly pray for the school and offer help with events. Strong links exist with the local community, this supports the appreciation of belonging to a wider community and the school values the help it receives. All members of the school community are aware of its Christian nature and the parents consider that the strong presence of the vicar and curate promote this. The parents were consulted on the Christian ethos of the school during the last headship and the current head teacher appreciates that this needs to become part of the school culture.

SIAS report January 2009 Blakesley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, The Green, Blakesley Towcester Northamptonshire NN12 8 RD