

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bucklebury Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Blacklands Road
Upper Bucklebury
Reading
RG 7 6QP

Diocese of Oxford

LEA: West Berkshire

Dates of inspection: 3rd October 2007

Date of last inspection: December 2001

School's Unique reference number: 109955

Name of Headteacher: Pippa Rowe

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Alan Thornsby 137

Context

Bucklebury Primary School is a small rural school where most pupils come from a white British background. The school is set in extensive grounds that provide a broad range of outdoor opportunities for pupils. There are plans to upgrade parts of the accommodation. The head has been in post since September 2006.

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

This is a good school with many strong features. The head, staff and governing body are committed to their vision to ensure that there is a continuing programme of development, in order to give pupils an excellent primary education, founded on a secure Christian ethos.

Established strengths

- The vision of the head for the continued development and communication of the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- The personal development of pupils
- Christian love displayed in everyday lives and relationships of the whole school community.
- The value placed on RE that has a significant impact on the broad curriculum offered by the school

Focus for development

- To explore a more overt recognition of the school's Christian ethos
- Involve pupils in the planning and delivery of collective worship

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

The quotation displayed on the wall by the school entrance, from Mark's Gospel 'Let the children come' demonstrates the Biblical background for the caring ethos that is readily obvious as one enters the school. The Christian values of love, forgiveness and compassion have a high profile in the life of the school. The high expectations of staff for children are underpinned by a small number of rules based on 'love your neighbour as yourself.' As a result children take responsibility for how this Christian love is lived out, seen in the 'Funky Friends'- pupils who ensure that no child is lonely during playtime. The headteacher and staff are role models in their daily lives and relationships, for pupils to mirror. RE has a high profile in the school and with the links made between other curriculum areas, circle time and worship results in pupils' personal development being a strength of the school. These give pupils opportunities to share and explore worries and time for reflections and questions. Pupils in Year Six, for example, explored the theme of

'Life after death' by talking with the vicar and members of other faiths about the meaning of rituals and beliefs. Children make good use of the range of outdoor facilities, such as the garden and the play and reflective areas for spiritual and personal development. The range of incentives and the Friday celebration of academic and personal achievement encourage self-awareness and this develops friendly, confident and articulate pupils who are very positive as they speak of their learning and relationships with adults in school. Pupils' views are taken seriously in school decisions. For example, when the governing body prepared a short list of charities from suggestions from the whole school community, it was pupils who made final choice. The school has identified the need to reinforce its distinctiveness with further visual evidence and for example, its inclusion in the school logo. However, throughout school, displays are often enhanced by the use of reflective questioning and words from hymns.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

This distinctive and important part of the school day has a powerful atmosphere and sense of coming together. This is because pupils sit at different levels in a horseshoe to engage with the leader as well as each other. Pupils respond to worship and describe it as 'a time to listen to God and learn about how to behave and treat each other.' They appreciate learning from stories, in the way that Jesus used them and explain 'the light of the world' as Jesus' example teaching us the difference between right and wrong. Worship gives pupils an understanding of how to relate and respond to each other. Prayer is an important feature of the daily life of the school that is valued by pupils. This is seen in their contributions to the prayer box, their explanation of prayer as 'times to think about past and future actions and the effect these have on other people.' They use simple rituals such as saying a blessing prayer together as a candle is lit. The school's own evaluation, using a pupil survey, indicates a need for greater involvement of pupils in the planning and delivery of worship. This is yet to be acted on. The ethos group is a powerful link between school and church contributing to the monitoring of worship, which has yet to be used to inform future development. There is a range of leaders from local churches and the church is used for special festival services that include parents and local community. The school choir sings in church, sometimes with the church choir and joins in the federation of schools to celebrate events such as 'New Noel' at Douai Abbey. These activities give pupils a sense of belonging to a wider Church community.

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

The head has a clear vision 'to see, hear and feel' the distinctiveness of this church school. This vision is based on a belief that the Christian ethos contributes to the academic and personal development of all children. To maintain the vision the head has benefitted from diocesan support and advice, as well as taking time to reflect on progress. Following her example as a leader and teacher, a united staff team has created an effective learning environment for all pupils. Foundation governors discharge their specific roles through their involvement in the ethos and community group. This has given them initial opportunities to explore how distinctiveness as a church school informs the School Development Plan. They are aware of the need to explore how Christian values challenge, support and direct every aspect of the school. The views of all stakeholders are regularly sought using a range of means and these are used to inform the school development plan. It is the inclusion of the views of the whole community, as well as the commitment of the governing body and sense of direction of the head that shows there is secure capacity for the school to continue to develop. There are well-established links with the church and community through foundation governors and the ministry team. These links allow the sharing of Harvest produce after the harvest service and carols at Christmas. The school benefits from a very supportive PTA the success of which is indicative of the high regard of parents and community for the school.