

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Northesk Street
Stone
Staffordshire
ST15 8EP

Diocese of Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire

Dates of inspection: 6th October 2006

Date of last inspection: 28th-30th March 2000

School's unique reference number: 124293

Headteacher: Mrs. L. Croxall

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. Heather Peake

School context

Christ Church School is a co-educational church school for pupils aged 4 to 9 years, within a Victorian building, situated close to the centre of the small Staffordshire town of Stone.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School as a Church of England school are good.

The school values its name, its roots and its partnership with Christ Church, and lays the firm foundations of a Christian education for its pupils.

Established strengths

- The Christian guidance of the Headteacher.
- The good coordination and practice with worship and Religious Education, which ensures good pupil progress, caring, sharing and understanding, and provides extensive opportunities for spiritual growth in many areas of school life and learning.
- The strong staff team spirit, demonstrating in practice the Christian ethos of the school, enables all members of the school family to feel supported, respected and valued.
- The positive support of parents and the community for the friendly, happy, and well-disciplined school environment, where their children are carefully nurtured and valued.

Focus for development

- Regularly monitor collective worship to include responses from pupils, staff, parents and foundation governors, to evaluate the quality and impact of worship.
- Continue to sustain and develop the good work already in progress, by building on the links with the vicar, and Christian leaders to extend pupils' experiences of worship.
- Encourage regular participation in school based weekly/holiday Christian clubs/parties, as opportunities for extended school family worship.

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

This is a good church school, with a positive Christian ethos, effective in providing for the needs of all its learners. It works hard to fulfil clearly stated aims in its mission statement to 'give children the opportunity to grow spiritually, ...to experience the love of God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, and to share in a daily act of Christian Worship and other major Christian festivals.' The school's Christian foundation and vision are well reflected in practice through worship, behaviour and relationships, and in the Christian symbols clearly displayed around the school. In the entrance, a special table with a cross on a cloth embroidered with the school sunshine badge and school name, many Christian artefacts and displays in the hall, classroom worship areas, and the reflection garden, to the memory of a pupil who died, in a corner of the school grounds. The central focus for worship in the hall is the worship table with a banner made up of the children's own art designs. This banner illustrates the major festivals in the Church calendar, which have been artistically made into a worship table cover by the church banner group. A candle is positioned in a beautiful stained glass window

holder, and the striking brass cross was given by a local old people's home. There is also a Good News Bible and a moving painting of Jesus on the cross, created in water colours, by the son of a member of staff. Pupils openly shared happy feelings about their school, and the importance of loving God and one another, as Jesus teaches. They enjoy worship experiences and freely shared their thoughts about God, Christian beliefs, and special times for prayer and reflection. The Lord's Prayer, the Grace and a Blessing are regularly used and there is a prayer at the end of the school day. The school have a 'Caring Code' which stresses the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation and a fresh start. The warm and friendly atmosphere around the school is relaxed but orderly, with pupils demonstrating caring, courteous and considerate behaviour.

Parents are pleased with the education, experiences and high level of pastoral care that the school provides for their children, and hold the school in high regard. Parents and children are encouraged to take part in community social and fundraising events by an active PTA, but parents would also welcome greater involvement in school worship. The school has a close association with Douglas Macmillan Hospice; their chaplain visits the school and pupils take part in 'Light up your Life' at the Victoria Hall, as well as supporting many community events like the Stone Pyramid RE Festival. Pupils have the opportunity to visit Lichfield Cathedral Open Door. Recently they have had link visits with Lincoln Cathedral choristers, and the school took part in a service for Palm Sunday on Radio Stoke. Pupils raise funds for a number of charities, for example the Salvation Army, the Bishop of Lichfield's 2006 Lent Appeal, National Children's Homes, Afghanistan Eye Appeal, Drop the Debt and Christian Aid, so raising their awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves.

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

Collective Christian worship is central to the daily life of the school, and takes place in the hall, classroom or church. The Headteacher, staff and vicar (fortnightly), lead whole school worship, and class worship is led by the classteachers and pupils, which is age appropriate. This pattern of worship, including appropriate music, songs, Bible reading, story/talk, a period of reflection and prayer, contributes well to an understanding of Anglican faith and tradition, which is also developed through Religious Education.

The good quality worship observed in the Harvest Festival, on the day of the inspection, was inclusive, imaginatively planned and provided clear opportunities for spiritual development. It exemplified a lively, colourful and creative Christian expression of thanksgiving to God. As pupils, staff, parents, governors and community joined together to celebrate and reflect on a bountiful harvest from all over the world, they also remembered the poor and needy, as they shared future plans of support by the school's involvement in Operation Christmas Child. Through this festival and their experiences in Christmas and Easter services, pupils have opportunities to engage with Anglican rituals so that they grow in their understanding of how Anglicans celebrate the major Christian festivals.

Evaluating the variety of worship opportunities pupils have in the school, is now the next step to ensuring quality experiences at all times.

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

The school is well led and managed as a church school. The Headteacher supports the Christian ethos and Christian values underpin all areas of school life. Collective Worship and Religious Education experiences foster spiritual development, and are well-planned and delivered. The good selection of worship resources are regularly renewed and updated, fulfilling recommendations of the previous Section 23 Report. The SIAS Toolkit gives a good evaluation of life and learning experiences in the context of this church school. A more rigorous monitoring programme, to assess and evaluate the quality and impact of collective worship throughout the school, would enable the incumbent/ foundation governors to work purposefully with the Head/Worship and RE coordinator/staff/pupils/parents to develop outstanding provision.