

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Great Horwood Church of England Voluntary Controlled Combined School

School End

Great Horwood

Milton Keynes

MK17 0RG

#### Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Buckinghamshire

Dates of inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Date of last inspection: January 2003

School's Unique reference number: 110441

Name of Headteacher: Lesley Whittaker

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Lyn Field NS 151

#### Context

This is a smaller than average primary school. The majority of pupils are White British and come from favourable socio-economic backgrounds. They enter the school in Years 3 and 4 as well as Reception because of the local organisation of schools. The staff team is now stable following a period of change.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Horwood Combined as a Church of England school are good

The support and encouragement that everyone shows for each other is rooted in the Christian values of compassion and trust. Pupils grow in an environment where they can learn effectively and explore their feelings about faith openly. The close involvement of the church ensures this school is at the heart of its community.

#### Established strengths

- The effective work of foundation governors
- The headteacher's spiritual and pastoral leadership of the school
- The pupils' support for each other in achieving personal goals

#### Focus for development

- To make more use of the pupils' perceptions of worship
- To involve everyone in the school community in shaping a plan for the next stage of its development as a church school

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

Pupils develop as compassionate, welcoming and responsible people. This helps them to work well together and support each other in reaching their personal goals. Encouragement to 'try, try and try again' can frequently be heard in school and the 'Cool to be kind box' is full of nominations. Thinking about each other is clearly more important than thinking about themselves and pupils say that this is what makes the school special. They are developing skills as leaders because they respond well to the role models of the adults in school and make good use of the opportunities to listen to the different views of others. For example, in a Year 5 circle time, members of the school council showed they could gather evidence and ask probing questions before summing up the views of the whole class. Behaviour in school is excellent because teachers make it clear what is appropriate for different activities. This creates an atmosphere in which everyone can learn and worship effectively. Pupils confidently relate what happens in school to what Jesus teaches and value prayer times at different points in the school day. Religious Education is taught in a way that helps them explore searching questions and they feel able to discuss their own faith openly. Their spiritual awareness is good and is strengthened by activities across all subjects. The planning for

this is still at an early stage and so there are missed opportunities in displays to focus pupils on more reflective questions. There is a particularly strong pastoral framework in place to support individual children through times of personal difficulty. Parents value the quality of this care and the way it embraces all members of the family.

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

Pupils have a good understanding of significant moments in life because these are clearly marked by acts of worship. For example, the farewell to a family leaving for Canada is part of morning worship. On special days, the church tower is lit up. Pupils appreciate how this confirms their place in the whole church community. They learn what worship means in the lives of practising Christians. This is because the adults in school and members of the church are actively involved in worship and talk about their faith. Pupils enjoy worship and compare what they gain from different types of services. Worship as a whole school clearly provides good teaching about Christianity because it is linked to what happens in their own lives. They recognise that class worship is a quieter time and more about personal response but they feel they need more help in using the time allocated to silence and reflection. In some year groups, pupils are able to play a role in leading class worship but this has not been consistently developed. There have clearly been improvements in the use of symbolism and simple rituals that are making worship more meaningful for children. This is the result of positive and ongoing dialogue between all the adults involved. The pupils do not yet have a regular role in this evaluation and so the best use is not made of their views and ideas in prioritising the next steps.

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

The manner in which the school works on a daily basis clearly demonstrates the Christian values of compassion and trust. The mutual support that exists between staff and governors is strong. This proved critical through a recent period where members of the school experienced significant loss and change. The headteacher and chair of governors lead by example and this has strengthened the spiritual life of the community. It is seen practically in the balance they achieve between challenging and supporting staff in their professional development. Parents value the school as a church school and feel their children benefit from its place at the heart of the community. Religious education and collective worship have a high profile and make a significant difference to how pupils develop in their personal lives. This is because the co-ordinator and foundation governors are highly effective in the work they do. In the period when the church was without a vicar, the governors ensured the church remained active in the lives of the children. The impact of the church developed further during this time and the new priest has inherited a strong basis on which to build. The headteacher, working closely with the deputy, has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. This has drawn on informal discussions with other colleagues and the actions these prompted have proved effective. The school recognises that there is no system for drawing together the views of everyone involved to shape a clear plan for development as a church school.