

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Great Missenden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Combined School**

Church Street  
Great Missenden  
HP16 0AZ

#### **Diocese of Oxford**

LA: Buckinghamshire

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Date of last inspection: September 2000

School's Unique reference number: 110427

Name of Headteacher: Rosalyn Thomson

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

#### **Context**

This large primary school is well known for successfully meeting the needs of pupils who face obstacles in their learning, including those in a Hearing Impaired unit. The majority of pupils are White British and come from homes that are well favoured socially and economically. Many attend the afternoon playgroup and nursery class but a significant number enter from local infant schools in Year 3.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Missenden C of E Combined School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The outstanding partnership between the headteacher and deputy is made even stronger by the presence of inspiring church leaders. Children experience what it means to be part of a Christian community and grow as compassionate and motivated human beings because learning is enriched by faith.

#### **Established strengths**

- Adults are excellent role models in enabling children to care for each other
- All children are fully included in the life of the school and able to achieve their best
- Dynamic leadership of collective worship leaves a lasting impact on pupils
- Christian values provide a structure for decision making and evaluation
- The Church's active involvement strengthens the personal development of pupils

#### **Focus for development**

- To explore the role of pupils in leading worship
- To be innovative in expressing the Christian ethos in the broader curriculum

#### **The school through its distinctive Christian character is outstanding**

This is because the church and the school are jointly committed to the development of children as mature human beings with a deep spiritual awareness. Church leaders are actively involved in school as members of staff, working with groups in personal education or in leading worship. Training led by the vicar has encouraged the staff to engage in lively debate about faith with both colleagues and pupils. Christian values are clearly central to the way the head and her deputy lead and manage the daily life of the school. As a result children see faith as a normal part of life, influencing the actions and attitudes of those who care for them. This integration of church and school means that children are recognised for far more than academic achievement. All leaders believe that unconditional love is the starting point for children achieving the best they can. This belief underpins the school's inclusive approach to learning and ensures that children of all abilities do well, especially those with very particular needs and disabilities, who flourish in this environment. What is even more impressive is the commitment of the children themselves to this culture. They explain that no-one is perfect but everyone is important and they feel this is what Christianity is about. When a pupil with disability took a key dance role in the Christmas service in church, the other dancers felt it was their responsibility to ensure it was performed successfully.

The care provided for children is exceptionally good and the role models the adults provide is the key reason for this. The level of trust and openness the children experience means they in turn can anticipate situations that might prove upsetting for particular pupils and seek out appropriate adults to support them.

Children are challenged spiritually and this strengthens their moral and social development. This is because the school carefully selects projects that will benefit children and give them experiences to develop skills in empathy and responsibility. Fundraising for the Tsunami appeal, hosting an African children's choir, a programme of residential visits and mini-enterprise schemes make an exceptional impact on children's personal development and it is significant that all of them involve links with the Church.

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

Pupils feel that worship is central to the school's identity. Those who attend Sunday worship in church explain that the pattern of Monday worship in school strengthens their understanding of Christianity because it mirrors the themes of the church year. Pupils find worship stimulating because leaders share their own talents and experiences and there is a strongly inclusive atmosphere enabling all children to participate through the performing arts. This enriches pupils' sense of Christian symbolism and imagery and most could offer an interpretation of a sophisticated dance sequence in the Christmas service. The music of different groups, from rock band to voice harmony, supports both celebration and reflection time and is an example of how the school's strengths across the curriculum enable everyone to benefit from worship. Pupils talk about how they value the time to be still and use the thinking skills that they learn in the classroom.

A significant feature of the school is that all pupils are engaged in the evaluation of worship twice a year. Responses indicate that it plays a key role in spiritual development because teachers ask questions that explore the lasting impact of collective worship on pupils. Action taken in response to this evaluation has focused on pupils as active participants but the school has yet to explore their potential as leaders.

The co-ordinator is very effective because she clearly understands that any developments must be focused on the spiritual needs of those present. Individual leaders, therefore, are able to make a strong contribution because she carefully allocates themes to suit the personalities and skills of colleagues. She is integrating the new programme for Social and Emotional Literacy into the worship framework and this is already helping children to make further connections between faith and everyday life.

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide outstanding leadership because they have a clear understanding of exactly how the distinctive Christian ethos of the school enables all children to achieve their best. This vision is shared by the clergy team whose presence in school helps make it a reality and also by the activities that link church and school at the heart of the community. These go far beyond services in church to show faith in action. Church members, for example, run a daily coffee shop for parents and this demonstrates the commitment to the whole family and the Lighthouse project has an established place at the end of the school year.

New initiatives are carefully selected by governors who have a good knowledge of the school. The current project to re-establish a kitchen and dining room clearly supports healthy eating and social development. Christian values underpin such projects but there are sometimes missed opportunities to explore these values in the curriculum outside of the framework for worship. The Church provides strong spiritual support for the school but equally there is challenge to ensure that decision making is a witness to its Christian foundation. This is the basis for the school's self-evaluation and consequently, the Christian ethos is integral to all of the governing body's work.