

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Hardwicke Parochial Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Poplar Way,
Hardwicke,
Gloucestershire
GL2 4QG

Diocese of Gloucester

LA: Gloucestershire
Date of inspection: Wednesday, November 28th 2007
Date of last inspection: November 2003
School's URN: 115684
Name of Headteacher: Mr Martin Bragg
Inspector: Mr Andrew Rickett, NS 201

School Context

Hardwicke is a large primary school which serves a mixed socio-economic catchment area. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. Nearly all children are of a white British heritage. The headteacher has been at the school since September 2007.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hardwicke Parochial CE VA as a church school are good

The school is at an exciting time with the arrival of a new headteacher bringing fresh ideas. This will further enhance the Christian character of a school that already has a well established and successful mission, ensuring that children have opportunities to succeed in their learning and develop as individuals.

Established strengths

- The school is committed to enhancing its Christian status.
- Children have the ability to see things from another person's point of view.
- Relationships are built upon trust and care for one another.

Focus for development

- Develop the role of governors through dialogue to identify how the school's mission has an impact on the learning and personal development of all children.
- Implement procedures for governors to monitor and evaluate collective worship and RE
- Involve children in the evaluation of collective worship.

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

The school's mission, based on Matthew ch.19 v.19: 'to love thy neighbour', is evident in the wonderful way that the whole school community seeks to lead its daily life. The school interprets this mission through the very high quality of care and respect which is found in relationships between all members of the school community. Children are strongly encouraged to understand how others feel, explained as stepping into the other person's shoes. This is seen in the many instances when children take care of each other and in the way that they show respect for the beliefs and opinions of others. Children know that they are in a safe environment where they can be at ease. A high level of trust exists so that children express themselves openly, knowing that their views will be taken seriously. All of this is done at a very high level and leads to an exceptional rapport between all members of the community, both in school and in the wider vicinity. The school's care for children is evident in the high quality of teaching and the strong curriculum. Standards of achievement are high and the school has effective procedures in place to ensure that all children have opportunities to reach their potential. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are very well supported and this enables them to reach their targets. Attitudes towards learning are excellent. Children respond well in lessons and are engaged in the tasks. There is very good provision in the way of school clubs to complement the formal curriculum and encourage children to develop their talents in areas such as music or sport.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The recent introduction of the 'Values for Life' programme has given a framework and structure to the daily pattern of worship and created close links to the school's ethos of loving one's neighbour. This innovation has breathed new life into collective worship and has made worship more central to the life of the school. Children have a good understanding of the importance of worship and know that it teaches how Jesus wanted people to lead their lives. Themes are well planned over a two year cycle and a focus for each term allows children to gain a far deeper understanding of an issue. For example, the concept of courage was being explored through a series of acts of worship that covered six weeks and therefore children had many opportunities to explore this from a wide range of view points. Because children are given guidance on how to focus their thoughts during times of reflection, they do so very effectively. This is often supported by a visual aid such as a lighted candle. Children's respond very well to these times, showing a quiet respect for each other and a marked degree of reverence. Prayer is used throughout the school day. Children understand the importance and purpose of prayer and can express their views in profound ways. For example, one child explained how he prays when he has done something wrong: "I close my eyes and it helps me to clear my mind of bad things. I can't really hear it, but I think He's saying it's OK." The vicar makes regular contributions to worship. He is popular with the children, who enjoy his visits. Messages given in worship are based on scripture and the school is successful at bringing these messages alive by linking them to the modern world and therefore making them relevant to the lives of the children.

The impact of the religious education is good

Standards in RE across the school are high. Children's attainment is at least similar to other core subjects and in some cases exceeds them. Teaching is consistently good. In these lessons teaching very effectively ensured that learning was constantly reinforced. Opportunities were given for children to experience a wide range of exciting activities and build on what they were learning in simple steps. This was particularly shown in one lesson where children engaged in a range of practical activities that gave them different experiences which, when put together, took their understanding of the meaning of Advent to a much deeper level. Planning is thorough with a good balance between knowledge and what children can learn through the study of different religions. This is well supported by good quality questioning from teachers who are able to draw out quite deep responses from the children. For example, in one lesson the children were asked how Mary and Joseph might have felt as they faced the reality of the birth of Jesus. The children's responses to this contributed to a powerful moment. Attitudes towards RE are good. Children say that they enjoy RE because they can express their beliefs and opinions openly and say what they really think in a safe environment which values and respects them. The agreed syllabus has been implemented and where planning is carefully differentiated, all children make good progress. The RE Co-ordinator has recently introduced assessment at the end of RE modules of work and has recognised that these need to be evaluated to identify clear standards of attainment.

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

The new headteacher has brought a fresh approach to the school's characteristic church distinctiveness. The initiatives that he is introducing will build upon the existing strong Christian ethos of the school which has been a significant part of school life for some years. The headteacher has wisely decided to spend time getting to understand the school before he takes the lead in taking the school onwards in its Christian mission. The establishment of an ethos committee to review the school's values is one of a number of initiatives that is planned. He is committed to developing the depth of the understanding of all those in the school community as to the school's distinctive qualities. The plans are in place to do this and are very clearly focussed. Governors fully support their headteacher in his vision. Established governors already have a good understanding that care for the whole child is central to the school's Christian duty. The appointment of a new chair of governors as well as several new governors and a recently installed vicar means that the school is at an exciting time. They are keen to work with their new headteacher to enhance the school's Christian identity further. Links with the parish both practically and through prayer, are very good. The vicar is a familiar figure in school through collective worship and in his involvement with the RE curriculum as well. The RE Co-ordinator has a good grasp of the syllabus and through regular monitoring of lessons has gained a clear understanding of what needs to be done to take the subject forward. She has a particularly strong philosophy about the importance that RE can make to the lives of the children. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and regard its Christian character as a main strength. They say that children feel safe and secure in this environment which treats them with great care.