

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Heddington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Church Road,  
Heddington,  
Calne  
SN11 0PJ

#### **Diocese: Salisbury**

Local authority: Wiltshire

Dates of inspection: 19th March 2008

Date of last inspection: January 2003

School's unique reference number: 126327

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Tracey Dunn

Inspector's name and number: Mr A W G Rickett 201

### **School context**

Heddington is a very small school of 31 children in a rural setting. A significant number of children come from the nearby town of Calne. The majority of children are from a white British heritage. A significant proportion of the children are boys. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average. There have been many changes in staff and the school is currently led by the acting headteacher.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Heddington CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good**

Heddington is a community in which children of all faiths or none are encouraged to develop a spiritual dimension to their lives. Both children and adults are able to celebrate their Christian faith and this has helped to create an environment in which the individuality of each child is valued.

### **Established strengths**

- The fundamental importance of Christian values which lie at the heart of the school.
- A real sense of mutual respect and care for each other.
- A commitment to identify how the Christian ethos can constantly be enhanced.

### **Focus for development**

- Build and strengthen the existing links between the school and church communities.
- Involve children in the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.
- Governors to lead a dialogue which identifies the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character on the learning and personal development of all children.

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

An advantage of being a very small school is that everyone knows each other. At Heddington this means that the building of relationships comes first so that everyone in the school community treats each other with respect and care. The school is very successful at this but has taken it further ensuring all children are valued for who and what they are and celebrating their individuality. Children appreciate this and display a well developed sense of self worth. These qualities of care and respect are rooted in Christian values and are reflected in

appropriate school policies. The behaviour policy, for example, values both kindness and honesty as a means of reconciling differences. With a high degree of care as part of the school, this has an impact on the daily lives of the children in the way older children play with and help younger ones both in class and at play. It is also seen when younger children support the older ones. Adults in school are very good role models for the children and show a marked regard for their sensitivities and achievements. Children are confident because they know that their views will be listened to with respect and this helps to give them positive attitudes towards the school and their learning. The school takes care to ensure that children have opportunities to develop a spiritual dimension in their lives. For instance, the children are encouraged to release sorrow and hurt through holding a stone which is placed on a cairn and delivered to God. Children have a good awareness of the world beyond the immediate village through RE lessons and the school's charity work. The school council play a prominent role in this and are rightly proud of their successes in raising money to support communities in Africa. Children of all abilities generally make satisfactory progress in their learning and the school is clear about what it has to do to ensure that the level of challenge results in a rise in overall achievement.

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

Worship is an important part of the life at Heddington as it puts Christian teaching at the centre of the school. This is evident in the way that the school has whole-heartedly embraced the opportunity to mark Holy Week through an innovative series of daily acts of worship that take the children through the events leading up to Easter Day. This initiative has been achieved through the close collaboration and enthusiasm of the acting headteacher and vicar but has also involved many members of the local community. The impact has been to raise the profile of worship throughout the community. Moreover, it has given children a significant understanding of the Easter story. For example, the creation by children of some moving depictions of the Stations of the Cross, which was one of the highlights, allowed them in the actual making of the pictures to ask questions about what they really mean. It is because worship is seen in this integral way that children regard it as an important part of school life and, through their creative involvement, clearly gain enjoyment from it. Their attitudes are therefore positive. Children have a good understanding of prayer and say that it can be a time when you tell God secrets that He alone will hear. One young child explained how praying can help to get bad things out of your mind. Children experience a broad range of worship styles. Having a good number of regular visitors who come to lead worship ensures they can find a style which suits them. The vicar leads worship every week and with other members of the parish church and the community, help children to understand the pattern of the church year. These regular visits make an impact on the children because they regard these visitors as members of school life. It means that when the children go to the church for worship, they are familiar with the vicar and treat the church like a second home. At other times the school uses the 'Values for Life' scheme which gives worship a clear structure and provides opportunities for children to explore such themes as 'trust' or 'compassion'. The school understands that to make worship more relevant to the children it needs to try and relate it more to their own experiences and feelings.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

There are effective assessment procedures in place which give an accurate reflection of children's attainment in RE. The school correctly says that this is satisfactory but has already identified how to raise standards. By using the children's good subject knowledge they may in future be able to explore in greater depth their understanding of how beliefs can make an impact on their own lives. Teaching overall is good. Teachers engage children in their learning because the learning intention is made clear to the children who then understand not only what they are learning but the next steps that will enable them to make further progress.

Teachers begin with the children's own experiences and build on these to explain how religion is important to those who believe. For example, in explaining the importance of the Torah, children were asked to think about objects that were special to them and how they treat these. Children respond to these questions well and are confident to talk to the rest of the class about their opinions and views. Lessons are differentiated so that children of all abilities can make appropriate progress. Children's knowledge of RE is good. Attitudes towards RE among children are generally positive. Children learn through creative activities that excite them with IT being used effectively to reinforce and extend understanding. They acknowledge how the study of other faiths can help them to appreciate and understand other beliefs and cultures and that it is important to do this to develop respect. The RE Coordinator ensures that RE has an important place in the curriculum and has a good understanding of how to take the subject forward.

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

The acting headteacher has very quickly begun to build on the good work of the previous head to take the Christian ethos forward. She successfully communicates her vision to the school community who share her enthusiasm to develop its Christian distinctiveness. She has a very strong commitment to this and enjoys being able to celebrate and share in the Christian character of the school. In this she is very well supported by governors who understand and value the impact that the Christian ethos can make on the lives of the children. The school's self evaluation shows how well the governors have reflected on what it means to be a church school. They are now eager to take their understanding further. Governors take their monitoring role seriously and have observed both RE and collective worship. Links with the parish church are very close. The vicar has quickly established a very good relationship with the acting headteacher and together they have put in place exciting initiatives such as the celebration of Holy Week. The vicar is a familiar figure in school both through leading regular acts of worship but also in his pastoral role where he is a reassuring presence for children and adults. He is enthusiastic and committed towards bringing an understanding of the Christian message to children and in this is very ably supported by members of the church community who regularly help to lead worship in school. The acting headteacher and vicar are already looking at how the bonds between their two communities can be made even stronger. The RE Coordinator has a good understanding of the importance of RE within the school curriculum and how it offers children opportunities to explore their beliefs. In particular she clearly articulates how children should be encouraged to use their knowledge of RE to help them explain how it can be applied to their own lives. Parents are very supportive of the school and say that they appreciate the care given to their children by adults in school. They say that its Christian ethos is an important part of the school and that their children feel both safe and secure here.