

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

High Wycombe Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School

Loakes Road
High Wycombe
HP11 2JU

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 30th January 2008

Date of last inspection: October 2001

School's Unique reference number: 110463

Name of Headteacher: Celine Hawkins

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

Context

This average sized school serves a diverse community in the centre of High Wycombe. Almost half of the pupils come from a minority ethnic background and a fifth are learning English as a second language. When children start school their attainment is broadly average. The school is actively supported by six churches in the High Wycombe team ministry.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of High Wycombe Combined as a Church of England school are outstanding

This school nurtures pupils of the Christian faith, encourages pupils of other faiths and challenges all adults and children to grow in their understanding of each other's beliefs. Pupils thrive in a stimulating environment where Christian values are brought to bear on every aspect of life in school.

Established strengths

- The clear leadership of the headteacher and chair of governors
- The respect for all faiths that is central to the vision for the school
- The open and honest way in which staff and pupils share their faith and beliefs
- The constant attention to improving the impact of the Christian ethos

Focus for development

- To develop ways of assessing the progress individual pupils make in RE

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

Relationships in the school are excellent and adults and children openly express concern for one another. Teachers know each their pupils well, they understand what is important to them and help shape their aspirations for the future. This ensures that Year 6 pupils, in particular, take their responsibilities very seriously because they feel their contributions are valued by the staff.

Parents comment very positively on the school's holistic approach to the curriculum. Music, art, sport and the sharing of faith have a high profile both in lessons and after school. Conversations between pupils make it abundantly clear how much they encourage and learn from one other.

They say it is as important to listen and watch as it is to perform themselves. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding because everything the school does promotes the importance of faith and challenges the whole community with the implications of Jesus' teaching. Excellent examples of this are the 'Culture House' in foundation stage, visits to the Mosque and Hindu temple and the whole school project working with Ben Okafor. One pupil said 'his visit made me consider how big God is'. Families of all faith traditions play a full part in the life of the school and this enriches what all pupils learn. They explain how what they believe affects their own moral decisions because they see at first hand the experiences of other pupils. A significant number choose to attend the school's Christian groups, including pupils of different faiths. Just as in lessons, the staff model openness, honesty and a pride in what they believe so

that no-one is isolated. Pupils in turn, learn to listen and respond generously in a way that does not isolate others. These attitudes extend into lessons and ensures that pupils from all backgrounds achieve their best.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The team of staff and clergy responsible for worship is exceptionally strong. As individuals they share their faith and different traditions with pupils. As a group they draw on their combined expertise to introduce innovative ideas so that children experience being part of a vibrant worshipping community. Worship and prayer make a significant difference to how well pupils learn and develop as people. This is because these times are carefully planned to provide mental refreshment between periods of concentrated learning in the school day. A prayer used by the whole school has replaced the weekly whole school target so that the focus for learning and behaviour is now captured in spiritual language. The introduction of worship in each class has changed the way pupils make use of personal prayer and reflection. They feel the prayer boards give extra weight to their concerns and that time for quiet thought has helped them think more clearly about their own beliefs. Worship in school is always explicitly Christian but the language used means that children of all faith backgrounds are keen to participate. Parents from different faith traditions are unanimous in saying this is a rich experience for all families. An excellent example of this is the annual blessing of the school. The parent prayer group requested that this take place during the school day and in each room the vicar explained how children of different traditions could understand the symbolism in the context of their own faith.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The religious understanding that pupils demonstrate in their discussions is outstanding. In a stimulating Year 6 lesson on the difference between founders and prophets, one pupil suggested a comparison of 'what the mind thinks and the mouth speaks'. Teachers pose challenging questions as the starting points for lessons and skilfully use the responses from pupils to lead them to the next stage of their thinking. In a lesson on the outward and inward signs of a person's faith, pupils give pertinent examples from today's society and quote from the Bible and other sacred texts to explain the points they are making. They have a detailed knowledge of both Christianity and other faiths because the themes discussed in worship and Christian clubs extend their understanding of key beliefs. They use religious language when it is appropriate and in a sensitive manner. Pupils enjoy RE. They say it opens up windows into different cultures and is about the choices they might have to make in life. The school's evaluation of RE takes a broad view of its role in the whole curriculum. Any new initiatives are carefully planned so that they lead to more effective teaching in all subjects. For example, training in the delivery of the new syllabus has been combined with ways of assessing how well pupils learn in all lessons and building in opportunities for their spiritual development. As a result of this teachers set challenging tasks that match the needs of each age group. The school has begun work on tracking the progress they individually make in both written and non-written RE.

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

The school demonstrates in practice that it values the presence of all groups in this multi-faith community. This inclusive approach is fundamental to its work and is rooted in Christian teaching. This is the shared vision of the headteacher and chair of governors, who is also the vicar, and clearly gives the school its direction. It has the enthusiastic support of staff, governors and parents and is the overriding reason why many have chosen to be part of the school. The school's Worship Group, made up of staff and governors, is highly effective in improving what the school provides. This is because it gathers evidence of the impact of different activities on the spiritual development of adults and pupils. It then makes informed decisions about new initiatives and training such as introduction of reflection time and Godly Play to ensure they address the school's needs. The scope of this group has evolved to cover all aspects of the school's Christian character. This has brought greater cohesion to the curriculum, particularly in its approach to spiritual development. The staff and governors are so passionate about what happens in this school. They are so constantly engaged in moving things forward that they do not always

recognise in their evaluation the strength of what they are already doing.

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