

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Littledean Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Street,
Littledean,
Gloucestershire
GL14 3NL

Diocese of Gloucester

Gloucestershire LA

Date of inspection: 4th July 2007

Date of last inspection: 19th November 2001

School's URN: 115632

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Valerie Huggett

Inspector: Miss Chris Hammant NS009

Context

Littledean Primary School is a small village school in the Forest of Dean currently with three classes. The head teacher has been in post for two years during which time the number on roll has increased. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are both above average.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Littledean as a Church of England school is good.

The school has a strong governing body which is committed, through its foundation governors, to supporting the Christian values of the school.

Established strengths

- A strong Christian ethos shared by all stakeholders.
- Good links with local churches of several Christian denominations.
- Committed and hardworking leadership and staff.
- Clear emphasis on the importance of worship and prayer in the life of the school.

Focus for development

From the previous Section 23 Inspection

- Include an explanation of the school's controlled status in the Prospectus.
- Raise awareness of all staff of the opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual development across the whole curriculum.

From this Section 48 Inspection

- Review and update policies for spiritual development, Religious Education and collective worship.
- Involve governors, staff and pupils in formally evaluating collective worship.
- Introduce simple aspects of the Anglican liturgy to worship.

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

The children of Littledean school are proud of their school. They feel valued and special and are very happy in their work and relationships. They have respect for their teachers and helpers and know how they should work and behave in school. They are confident and polite and demonstrate an understanding of their own self-worth. The Christian values which permeate the school are evident in the way the children treat each other and the adults who work with them. The children acknowledge the help given to disabled pupils in the school and willingly support charities nominated by the School Council. The warm family atmosphere of the school enables children to express their ideas and feelings with confidence. The strong focus on prayer is a major contributor to pupil's spiritual development. Children speak with pride about the quiet area of the school grounds where they can sit and reflect. They know if they are worried or upset there will always be someone to whom they can go and talk. Staff and learners are confident that their views are taken into account and taken seriously. There is clear evidence of collaborative working and a common purpose. Any conflicts or disagreements are dealt with immediately and in a caring way with the focus on forgiveness and reconciliation. The Christian character of the school is evident in the atmosphere and relationships in the school. It could be better expressed publicly through a more specifically Christian school logo. The Religious Education displays in the classrooms are bright and eye-catching and include children's work which illustrates the spiritual focus and depth of their learning in this subject. There is evidence in the children's RE books of good quality learning across the two attainment targets in RE. The RE and the Spiritual Development policies have not been reviewed for some time and this would be appropriate in the light of the revised Agreed Syllabus. In this school children are helped to view each other as made in the image of God.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory with some good elements

Worship occupies a key place in the life of the school and underpins its Christian character. There is a worship focus in the hall, the theme of the worship is displayed and there is a board where children can pin their prayers. The strong emphasis on prayer was evident in acts of worship when children's prayers were read out and offered to God. The importance of every prayer, whether for thanks or for help, was made very clear, respected and valued. However, there was no specific time of quiet for reflection in worship. There were opportunities for spiritual development as the various elements were drawn together in prayer and concluding points were made. Children take an active part in worship contributing to drama and singing with enthusiasm and confidence. The children in Key Stage Two make up the school choir, led a governor and Salvation Army officer, and they sing beautifully. They have sung in local churches and an old people's homes at various special times in the Christian year. There is an after school club run by Salvation Army officers where both Bible-based activities and worship take place. The policy for worship, although implemented, has not been reviewed for some time. Worship themes are planned for each week and some are drawn from the 'Values for Life' materials. Worship is led by the head teacher, members of staff, governors and visitors who represent a cross-section of the Christian denominations in the area. All members of staff attend worship which embraces the full age and ability range. There is class worship once a week. The introduction of an Open the Book team is planned where a group of local church members read and act Bible stories to the children, usually once a week. Some informal evaluation of worship already takes place but a more comprehensive and analytical approach would assist in monitoring and recording the effectiveness of provision. Children enjoy worship and understand and articulate its importance for them. They behave well and actively engage with dialogue and drama. Children know and share the Lord's Prayer. A teaching assistant signs the worship to a deaf child and the whole school has learnt to sign 'Good morning everyone'. The introduction of the Anglican greeting and peace would provide a further opportunity for shared signing and familiarise children with some simple Anglican liturgy. The school celebrates the major Christian festivals with special services in the local church and parents show increasing support for these.

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

The aims of the school identify clearly the Christian vision held by the head teacher and governors. This is echoed in the key policies relating to the Christian character of the school and the head teacher exemplifies this vision in her dealings with children, parents, staff and governors. The appointment of a teaching assistant responsible for family welfare in the school reflects the school's desire to engage with and support families when they have particular needs and this is one example of Christian love in action. The active involvement of the parish priest in the life of the school enables effective pastoral and spiritual links to be forged between the parish and the school. The head teacher has attended Parochial Church Council meetings to talk about the school's development. She has evaluated the school as a church school but governors have not yet been involved in this process. There is a positive approach to church school improvement and a willingness to act on the outcomes of self-evaluation and advice. Throughout the school standards have been raised in the last two years. Staff members enjoy teaching RE and are aware of the importance of this subject as a vehicle for conveying values and morals that contribute to the school's ethos as a church school. They are also aware of their responsibility to ensure that children are taught about other cultures and religions as the school serves a mono-cultural area. Staff feel valued as individuals and part of a happy, supportive team committed to the ethos of the school. Governors are linked to subject areas, including RE, and visit the school to monitor lessons. After a visit they complete a visit sheet, which could be usefully shared with other governors at meetings. Meetings of the governing body begin with prayer. The school has received training and support from the Diocese as part of its continuing professional development. The head teacher sent out a questionnaire prior to the inspection and the results reflected the parents' awareness and appreciation of the Christian principles on which the school operates. They acknowledge the family atmosphere of the school and the value this adds to their children's education. They are aware that each child is loved and cared for as an individual. The links the school has with the local Christian denominations are strong and serve to make the school an important part of the community.

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