

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Little Missenden Church of England Voluntary Aided Infants School

Little Missenden
Buckinghamshire
HP7 ORA

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 13 May 2008

Date of last inspection: February 2004

School's Unique reference number: 110457

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Patricia Bridges

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Mrs Jenny Lee 560

Context

Little Missenden Infants School is a very small, rural infant school. It is situated in an area of comparative advantage; with no pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. A very small number of the pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school has a very close relationship with the local parish.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Little Missenden Infants School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Christian values permeate the whole school. Its distinctiveness is seen in the passion of the headteacher for the development of its Christian vision.

Established strengths

- The passion and leadership of the headteacher for the pupils to experience the Christian vision developed by the staff and governors.
- The impact of the link with the parish church and incumbent.
- The attention given to all aspects of the children's development.
- The care children take for each other.

Focus for development

- Develop the RE curriculum so that pupils have opportunities to develop their own ideas especially through discussion.
- For governors to be involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Christian ethos on the pupils.

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

"We are a Church of England School, we are a school that believes in Jesus," said one child, exemplifying how the Christian ethos permeates the school. Every child in the school has access to a very full and exciting enrichment programme. These activities take place after school every day, and some lunch times. There are also regular opportunities for children to participate actively in Sunday services at the parish church, with their own prayers and songs. These occasions are cherished, both by parents and the regular members of the congregation. "We love to see the children in church taking part," said one and she also said some of the more elderly in the congregation make a special effort to get to the service when the children are there. The incumbent includes the children in the Eucharist by having them gathered about him at the altar and explaining simply the meaning of the words and actions during the offertory hymn, and then inviting them to the rail for a blessing during the Eucharist. Children say how special this makes them feel.: "We love it," said one child. Parents and children say overwhelmingly that their school is a safe and happy place to be. One parent spoke eloquently of how caring and inclusive staff and pupils were of her child with particular difficulties; the school enabled him to take part in all activities in a way that did not single him out. The school's parent teacher association, PSALMS, is instrumental in supporting the work of the school in many ways. The school's Christian ethos is

powerfully reflected in the excellent relationships between all its members. The quality of care is exemplary and enables children to behave very well, The children show great maturity in resolving difficulties but adults are always there to help if needed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the school's identity, despite the difficulties of having a small hall that is also a classroom. The impact of regular worship in the church during the school day and on Sundays has been powerful, for pupils, staff, parents and the community. The children respond reverently to the lighting of the candle, "Jesus is the light of the world and the candle helps us to think of him and how he is always with us." Collective worship is taken in the round, which enables children to see this as a special part of the school day. The children know by heart a range of prayers and songs, this helps them to think about God, and feel close to God. Adults and children talk about prayer being part of their daily routine. One teacher, during a lesson, talked incidentally about the use of the word deliver in the Lord's prayer and the children responded by reciting it. The themes for collective worship are well planned and enable the children to link Bible stories to their own lives. The vicar skilfully linked an act of worship about the Lord's Prayer to the relationship children had with their own friends and family in addition to developing a relationship with God. Children's spiritual awareness is developed across the curriculum, with one child recognising and describing the wonderful setting of the school. The school has a group of pupils who meet about once a term to evaluate worship and which aspects help them to be closer to God. A recent training day for all staff and governors entitled "Our Vision, Their Future" enabled everyone to contribute towards the vision for Collective Worship. The plan to hold worship in the round came from this day. At the moment there are no children of other faith backgrounds in the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Excellent art produced by the children accompanies displays of Religious Education around the school, and a superb big book consisting of children's art and photographs details the Creation Story effectively and imaginatively. These, added to the many photographs of children at work and play, create a vibrant atmosphere throughout the school; the children and parents alike appreciate this. Children's knowledge of Christianity, Bible stories and the major Christian festivals is good. During one Religious Education lesson the children were led very sensitively by the teacher to understand Shabbat and the similarities and differences between Judaism and Christianity in the taking of bread and wine. In another lesson children could write using descriptive language about Moses' response to the burning bush. The school makes good use of the interactive whiteboards to support teaching and learning in Religious Education and has a good range of resources. Standards in Religious Education are good and in line with those in other subjects in the school. Learning in Religious Education makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of the children. The headteacher and staff are currently exploring ways of children becoming more actively involved in lessons through discussion but this was not yet observable.

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

The dedication and energy of the headteacher and Chair of Governors are outstanding and pivotal in the successful development of the Christian ethos and values of the school. This is the second year since the appointment of the headteacher and her leadership has enabled the school to move forward quickly. Staff greatly value the fact that they can now participate in the development of the vision through the first annual training day, open to all staff and Governors. Parents were strong in their praise of all the school's extracurricular work and the development of good communications and appreciate the fact that the school canvasses their views on different matters. Standards in all areas of the curriculum are good and children make good progress from their starting point. The headteacher and Chair of Governors are passionate in their desire to move the school forward and have made rapid progress, but Foundation Governors haven't yet addressed the need to be involved in monitoring the impact of Collective Worship, Religious Education or the Christian ethos on the school.