

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Marsh Gibbon Church of England Voluntary Aided First School,

Castle Street,
Marsh Gibbon,
Bicester,
OX27 0HJ

Diocese of Oxford

LA: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 12-06-07

Date of last inspection: January 2002

School's Unique reference number: 110411

Name of Headteacher: Mrs L. Metherell

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Mr J.W. Bradley NS129

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Marsh Gibbon First as a Church of England School are outstanding

The Mission Statement of Marsh Gibbon First School is very clear regarding the wish to educate its pupils within a Christian environment. This is achieved in an outstanding atmosphere of Christian love, where all involved with the school in whatever capacity feel supported and nurtured. No-one is left out and it is the relationships between head, staff, pupils, parents, incumbent and church that are at the heart of this success.

Established Strengths

- The relationships throughout, based upon Christian love for one another.
- The atmosphere and impact of Collective Worship.
- The knowledge demonstrated by the pupils of the Christian faith.

Focus for development

- To implement the new Buckinghamshire RE syllabus.
- To develop the ideas regarding the teaching of other faiths through designated 'special weeks'.
- To conclude the current School Improvement Plan aims of further links with the school's church.

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

Approximately 50% of the pupils attend this school from out of area as their parents have opted for them to do so. This is testament to the way Marsh Gibbon First is perceived by so many people. 'It is a very caring school' and 'our children feel loved and cared for' are typical parent comments. The pupils clearly enjoy being there and say 'we look after one another in our school'. Displays in classrooms and around the school bear witness to the overt Christian ethos, with the cross in the school hall, to which all the pupils contributed, being an outstanding example. Teachers and other staff relate exceptionally well to the pupils and every child is treated as an individual, with their needs being clearly understood. The foundation of this success is a devoted head and staff, supported by a committed incumbent, who see the value of an overt Christian approach to pupil's needs. The school is a real part of its community and is very much respected for its contributions to events such as Harvest Teas and contributions to village fetes etc. Charitable giving has a high profile and pupils understand the need to help others less fortunate.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective Worship lies at the heart of this school's mission to its pupils. The atmosphere is clearly that of Christian worship with a real sense of integrity for all. All staff regularly attend, thus confirming the whole community aspect of the activity. Highly appropriate focal points, including a table, called by the pupils themselves an altar, candle and cross all add to the occasion. Worship is well planned and recorded and is regularly discussed by staff and incumbent regarding its impact and effectiveness. Pupils' opinions are also sought. A system of monitoring by governors is a relatively new addition to the evaluation of worship, which will increase their understanding of the crucial importance of this part of the school's life by leading to regular discussion. There is always a real will and desire to make changes or improvements where they are felt necessary, such as a future development to 'refresh' the school prayer. Pupils enjoy the occasion and are more than happy to say so. Prayer and reflection are well used to help pupils understand the reason they are there and Anglican aspects are well covered by the following of the church's year and by appropriate and regular contributions from the incumbent. These include services held in the church where pupils learn about the use of the building and special occasions such as Baptism. Ceremonies from other faiths, including Islam and Judaism are regularly demonstrated and explained to increase pupils' understanding. The impact of collective worship on whole school ethos is clear as the aspects of care for and about each other are very evident throughout this school.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is outstanding

The teaching, assessment and regular evaluation of Religious Education is well led by a knowledgeable and committed co-ordinator. Standards in the subject are very high and pupils' knowledge of Old and New Testament stories is very noticeable. Good quality work is done in a variety of ways, including poetry, prose, art and drama. This work is regularly assessed and teaching monitored and evaluated. A new local authority syllabus, recommended by the diocese has now to be introduced and the school is well placed to effect this. The impact of the teaching of this subject is perceived as being vital to whole school ethos and all RE lessons are clearly linked to the pupils' own lives and the effects of their actions upon others. A lesson based upon 4 stories about Jesus resulted in outstanding discussions and conclusions regarding forgiveness, sharing, care for others and equality. The story of Adam and Eve, taught to younger children, was equally successful in helping pupils to consider appropriate behaviours. Effective support from the incumbent adds to the range of knowledge made available to the pupils. The understanding of other faiths is well taught and there are good plans in place further to develop pupils' knowledge.

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

The leadership and management of Marsh Gibbon School are based upon genuine co-operation between all concerned. The dedicated headteacher is very clear that 'all staff are senior management' and that it is this way of working which will be of most benefit to the pupils. The excellent working relationships amongst the staff are greatly assisted by a well led governing body which appropriately questions how the school is developing. Added to this is the support of a highly supportive incumbent, church members and local community. Underlying the work being done is the genuine belief that 'our school is and should be a church school'. Marsh Gibbon has only had Aided status for the last three years, which has led staff and governors to question the benefits of such a transition. The conclusion is that the school can and should be overtly Christian in its aims for its pupils. Evaluation by governors of the distinctive character of the school and how it may be developed is at an early stage. The pupils clearly matter in this school and as a result of the feelings of Christian love and care transmitted to each and every one of them the school is a happy, thriving place where each individual is given every opportunity to succeed.