

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Mottram Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

War Hill
Mottram
Hyde
Cheshire
SK14 6JL

Diocese: Chester

Local authority: Tameside
Dates of inspection: 23rd January 2008
Date of last inspection: 12th & 13th January 2004
School's unique reference number: 106237
Headteacher: Mrs J Chapman
Inspector's name and number: Mrs S Bowen 454

School context

This is a small school in a semi-rural area, with almost all pupils of white British heritage. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low, as is the percentage of those with learning difficulties or disabilities. The pupils are organised in five mixed age classes, with no on-site nursery provision.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mottram CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

Mottram CE Primary School gives its pupils a secure foundation in the Christian faith to equip them for life, and a high quality education set in the context of a loving and caring family.

Established strengths

- The school's uncompromising stance as a Christian community
- The way pupils are enabled to discuss and debate challenging ideas and to tackle abstract religious concepts with confidence
- The strong, open and honest links between the church and the school

Focus for development

- To implement a detailed process of self evaluation so that all the governors are clear about the impact of the Christian provision on the pupils

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

Pupils are clear that this is a Church of England school and that this makes it different from some other schools. Older pupils state that they know the school works very closely with its church, and that they enjoy this very much. They experience great security in feeling safe, valued and respected within the family of school. Relationships between all members of the school community are warm, caring and fun-loving. The pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they demonstrate great respect for each other. The school's challenging question "What would Jesus do?" is widely used to enable pupils to consider the consequences of their actions on others. The School Council organises charitable fund-raising, identifying the target charity by discussion with all the other pupils. They know that giving to help others is a good example of Christianity in action. Displays throughout the school reinforce the clear Christian message. Through being encouraged to grapple with challenging abstract concepts such as salvation and eternity, the pupils develop spiritual awareness and improve their skills in discussion and debating. By the time they reach years five and six they exhibit great maturity and a responsible attitude to life based on clear moral codes. Pupils are well prepared for life in a multi-faith society through the study of other religions and cultures.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is of central importance on the school and all partake in it with positive attitudes and great enjoyment. Teaching staff stay in and join in as appropriate, underlining the message to the pupils that this time together is of central importance to the spiritual life of the school. Lively teaching methods enhance the provision and give practical illustrations so that even the youngest pupils can gain something to remember. The singing of hymns is of a very high quality, which reinforces the spiritual impact of this shared activity. Pupils develop their understanding of Anglican faith and practice through the standard prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer and the Grace, but are equally accustomed to making up prayers to suit different occasions. They visit the church frequently and enjoy exploring its features and artefacts, recording these in detailed drawings. They say that they love the regular services in church and that it makes them feel part of the church and village life. The vicar leads the collective worship in school every fortnight as well as regular acts of school worship in church. Collective worship is planned in termly themes but its impact is not currently evaluated.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education is led with great enthusiasm by the coordinator whose subject knowledge acts as a useful resource for other staff. His own teaching captures the pupils' attention by being active and amusing. He strives hard to help younger pupils tackle challenging ideas, such as Jesus being like a shepherd and caring for us as his sheep. The pupils have gained sufficient confidence and knowledge by years five and six that they can express their own personal beliefs clearly, supported by the outstanding skills of their teacher. They discuss aspects of other religions respectfully and search for similarities as well as differences with Christianity, such as fasting for Muslims and Lent for Christians. The emphasis throughout school is on giving them the courage and security to be able to express their views, with a clear focus on carrying this skill forward into their life beyond primary school. The school is currently changing to a new syllabus which will take two years to go through its cycle. Staff are assessing the pupils' achievements as this progresses, but it will take time for this to be fully aligned with the new syllabus.

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

The dynamic headteacher has a passionate belief in her school and pupils. She promotes a very positive climate in which all participants feel valued and able to express their views. She is unequivocal about the school's stance as a Christian community, and has ensured that public documentation expresses this clearly. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the school prospectus. For example, whilst parents are informed that they have the right to withdraw their child from collective worship, it is also quite clear that "it would be impossible to separate a child from the Christian ethos of our school". Parents appreciate this clarity of purpose and are delighted to subscribe to it. The whole school community supports the headteacher's Christian vision for the school and works diligently to put it into practice. The vicar has recently become chair of governors and is very keenly involved in the life of the school. He and the headteacher have developed an honest and open relationship which enables them to work effectively together. His active involvement extends to practical fundraising activities such as a sponsored abseil from the church roof, a most successful community activity on behalf of its school. Two recently appointed foundation governors support the school well with more experienced governors challenging the Headteacher appropriately. The school has started its own system for evaluating the quality of its provision in terms of a church school, but this does not yet include governors other than the chair. The school appreciates that developing this aspect of its work as a wider consultation exercise is the next stage of its development.