

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Mountnessing Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Mountnessing

Brentwood

CM15 OUH

**Diocese: Chelmsford**

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2008

Date of last inspection: June 2002

School's unique reference number: 115117

Head teacher: Vacant Ms Fiona Reid providing headteacher support

Inspector's name and number: The Rev'd Richard Peers 125

#### **School context**

This is small village school situated at the heart of its village community midway between Brentwood and Chelmsford. Most pupils are of white British origin and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. There are currently 83 pupils on roll.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Mountnessing as a Church of England school are satisfactory**

Mountnessing School is a place where pupils feel safe and happy. The attractive site is a good environment and pupils enjoy coming to school. There are good links with the church and an awareness of those in need. After a period of instability measures are now in place to lead the school to success.

#### **Established strengths**

- The pattern of fundraising and charity activities
- Parental support

#### **Focus for development**

- To develop the Governing Body in its understanding of what it is to be a church school
- To use Christian symbolism widely in the buildings and grounds to give pupils a glimpse of God in beauty
- To use displays to reflect the diversity of cultures and races in Britain and throughout the world
- To develop the place of RE in the life of the school

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

This is a school which parents, pupils and staff feel very loyal to. They rightly praise its calm atmosphere and family like quality. However, the Christian ethos is undeveloped and like many aspects of the school's life is expressed in a low-key kind of way. There is little sense of excitement and enthusiasm and the new input of energy from the newly appointed headteacher is much needed.

Some pupils do not know that they attend a church school or what that might mean. They could describe occasions celebrated in church and know the parish priest who has recently left, they know that the job of a priest is to 'talk about Jesus' but they do not know where their cathedral is, who a bishop is or about the wider church.

Pupils were not able to talk about God with much variety or how they might experience the presence of God. There was not much difference between the way younger and older pupils described God and faith.

The school's good behaviour guide does not make any reference to Christian values and pupils were not able to describe how faith might affect behaviour.

Standards in RE appear to be poor. Marking is not linked to learning outcomes and does not enable pupils to understand how to make progress. Work is not of a very high quality in

presentation or content. Pupils reported that they did not do RE 'very often'. Younger pupils could talk about some lessons on people of other faiths but they did not know where such people might live other than 'abroad' or 'in other countries'. Parents were not able to talk much about RE or its place in the school's curriculum life.

Display around the school is attractive although it does not sufficiently represent a multi-ethnic society. Pupils know that a cross and Bible are used as a focus in worship and that there is a cross in the hall. They were not able to talk about other Christian symbolism in the school or to express how they might find God through their senses.

Classrooms are well ordered but do not feel very purposeful and more able pupils spoke of being asked to do more but not being given additional enriching work.

Pupils spoke movingly of raising money for a pupil to undergo an operation in the United States and funds for a hospice where a pupil at the school had died. They were unable to relate this fundraising to the Christian faith or to stories that Jesus told.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Collective Worship is part of the regular experience of school life and pupils enjoy it. They are able to talk about a number of hymns and songs they sing and parents and pupils have benefited from hearing stories from the bible.

An assembly seen enabled pupils to think about a well known Bible story and use actions to engage with it.

The school's prospectus describes the worship as 'broadly Christian' and non-denominational and suggests it fits the 1988 Act but this does not in fact apply to church schools. Pupils did not know much about what might happen in an Anglican church, they were not familiar with liturgical greetings or prayers and did not know about the Eucharist.

Parents spoke particularly positively of the use of the church for Harvest, leaver's and other acts of worship.

Worship is planned using themes and also reflects the main elements of the Christian year.

However, pupils were not able to talk about the meaning of prayer or to say how they could make requests for prayer or find time for prayer in the day to day life of the school. They were not able to say where they could go in order to be quiet or to have time for reflection.

A table in the hall is used to hold a Bible and candle but pupils could not remember when the candle had been lit.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory**

The school is in a period of change and a new substantive headteacher will begin in a few weeks time. The Headteacher support provided has moved the school forward and created a situation in which the new Head will be able to make the necessary changes and developments. Parents spoke very positively of the interim head teachers and the expertise they have brought to the school.

The Governing Body has not exercised a critical enough role in holding the school to account and has not sought to evaluate the school's Christian ethos. Governing Body meetings do not begin or end with prayer. Governors give of their time generously and among the Governors there are the skills and experience needed to move forward with the new headteacher. Governors are also open to developing the school's church life and their own understanding and experience of what it is to be a church school. However, faith was not raised in discussion with candidates for the post of head teacher.

Although the prospectus refers to the school's history and foundation there is no application of the Christian faith in the values expressed by the school or in developing a culture based on the Christian tradition.

Although the parish is currently in interregnum relationships with the church have been good in the past and pupils and parents speak very positively of links with the church. The school uses the parish church for some events and pupils know that it is their church.

'The Friends of Mountnessing School' brings together parents, teachers, Governors and other members of the local community in supporting the life of the school. Pupils recognise that this giving is important for the school community.