

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Much Birch Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,

Much Birch,
Hereford
HR2 8HL

Diocese of Hereford

Herefordshire LA

Date of inspection: 5th October 2006

Date of last inspection: 23rd October 2003

School's Unique reference number: 116833

Name of Head Teacher: Mr. Colin Howard

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number Mr M.J.Pye

Summary Judgement

The school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England School is good with some outstanding features.

The recommendations of the previous inspection have been implemented and the school's procedures for self evaluation are secure.

Established strengths

- The importance given by the school leadership to the Christian foundation of the school.
- The positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils and their genuine care for others.
- The outstanding way in which Values Education has embedded itself throughout the school.
- The quality of R.E. teaching.

Focus for development

- To give an even higher profile to the celebration of children's achievements. This could include a Celebration of Achievement book or display in the school.
- To provide more space within the school's buildings or grounds for children's quiet reflection.
- To make greater use of the local parish churches for celebration and worship and to support the curriculum.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners in good way

In the school prospectus the Head Teacher writes, "*We will endeavour to set our children on the right path...by developing a reasoned set of Christian values and beliefs.*" This is clearly happening at Much Birch C.E. School.

This is a caring and happy school that values its Christian foundation and actively promotes Christian values. There is a culture of mutual support and all efforts are valued and celebrated.

There is a clear and agreed focus on Values Education. Each month a different value is explored through assemblies, class work, and church and community links. This has a powerful impact! Christian care and concern for others is clearly demonstrated throughout the school, both in what one sees and hears. The impact of the friendship jar, displayed on the focus table, is very evident: "*That's real friendship. We must put a stone in the friendship jar*" was part of a conversation between pupils overheard on the playground.

The excellent relationships, strong teamwork and high morale that exist across the

school promote good behaviour and high expectations.

Teaching methods are clearly planned to engage all pupils. Pupils enjoy learning and are able to offer their own opinions and thoughts about what their church school means to them. Older pupils spoke enthusiastically about their responsibilities and how the school celebrates their achievements.

The quality of teaching observed was outstanding. There is a consistent and progressively challenging approach based on imaginative and detailed planning. This leads to very high standards of pupil response. Children clearly enjoy their lessons; they ask lots of questions, are able to build upon personal and prior knowledge and behave very well.

The teaching of RE is consistent with the school's aims and values and it makes a major contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to school and community life. There is a very effective and articulate school council and pupils feel valued and safe.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The opening paragraphs of the school's Collective Worship policy explain that, *"Christian worship is concerned with bringing praise, prayer, thanksgiving and adoration to God .. allows pupils an opportunity to reflect upon the value, purpose and meaning of things....an experience to counterbalance the busy activity which generally marks the rest of the school day"*

Worship is an important and special time in the daily life of the school. There is a clearly defined weekly pattern of worship, often linked with value of the month, and there is opportunity for all in the school community to be involved.

In the Act of Worship observed during the inspection, the whole school took part. Music was used to create a calm and worshipful atmosphere. Children entered the hall in a quiet and alert manner and sat before the focus table. A candle was lit.

The Head Teacher had planned for a focus on the value of the month: Understanding. Links were made with children's own experiences with an invitation to share their ideas and thoughts. This led into a Bible reading by one of the older pupils. A hymn of thanksgiving was sung and there was opportunity for pupils and staff to engage in quiet reflection before three older pupils led the school in prayer.

This was a clear expression of Christian worship and values. Children were attentive and were keen to share, and consider, their thoughts and ideas. It was delivered in a well planned, relaxed way and linked with values being explored across the school. Conversations with children and parents indicate a very positive view of Collective Worship. A number of parents cited the Christian foundation and firm attention to Worship as a reason for sending their children to the school with one parent saying *"It strengthens our school communityand helps our children feel valued."* Parents are invited to attend class assemblies and many do. Parents and pupils speak enthusiastically about the celebration of children's achievements in the weekly Praise Assembly.

All staff are involved in school worship and class prayers are said at appropriate times during the school day.

The school has established links with St. Mary and St Thomas a Becket Church and is currently exploring ways to make greater use of parish churches both for celebration and worship and to support the curriculum.

The Vicar and other Foundation Governors are regular visitors to the school and the children know them very well.

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

The quality of leadership is outstanding and contributes significantly to the success of the school as a church school. There is a very good understanding of, and commitment to, the school's Christian purpose. This Christian vision, support and challenge underpins everything the school currently does. This was very evident when, considering the format for last term's Head Teacher appointment interviews, the

Governors chose to ask candidates to lead the whole school in an act of Collective Worship as part of the selection process.

The newly appointed Head teacher provides an excellent example of Christian care and concern for all members of the school community. He has taken a lead in promoting Values Education which has so very quickly taken firm root throughout the school.

Foundation governors are active in promoting the school's distinctive Christian character in the wider community. The Vicar has established very strong and supportive links with the school. Pupils contribute to the Parish Magazine and a significant number attend for Saturday morning workshops at the church.

Children and parents describe their school as a safe, welcoming and special place.

SIAS report October 2006 Much Birch Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Much Birch, Hereford HR2 8HL