

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

The Nethersole Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Street,
Polesworth
Tamworth
Staffordshire
B78 1DZ

Diocese: Birmingham

Local authority: Warwickshire
Dates of inspection: 25.4.08
Date of last inspection: 28.4.04
School's unique reference number: 125686
Headteacher: Mr Andrew Lord
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Joan Furlong (98)

School context

This is a larger than average size school, where most pupils come from the local area. Most pupils are of White British origin. The school was founded by the Nethersole family in 1638 and is part of a long tradition of education in the area, which began with the Abbey school in 827 AD. Regular church links are maintained with Polesworth Abbey, which is the parish church in Polesworth. The current school building was created as a Middle school. It is open-plan, spacious and sited in extensive grounds. A private nursery is sited within the school buildings. The school is in a place of educational transition, with a high turn-over of staff and teaching and management responsibilities. The school is currently seeking 'healthy schools' status. It puts a high focus on the performing arts and ICT development.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Nethersole CE Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory.

Through aims, which are rooted in Christian values, the school makes sound provision for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to assembly, worship, learning and personal development. Christian values are promoted and reflected in the good behaviour and responsiveness of pupils. Learners are encouraged to do their best within a happy, supportive and caring atmosphere. The school link with Polesworth Abbey is distinctive and defines what worship is for most pupils.

Established strengths

- Delightful children, who are polite, well behaved, open and expressive.
- An inclusive school, where every child matters and the majority of pupils try their best.
- A visionary headteacher and hard-working staff team.
- The work of Father Phillip in his roles as priest, worship leader and Chair of Governors.

Focus for development

- Make more explicit the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- Empower the governors to monitor the life, value and achievements of this Church school, so to inform its next stage of development.
- Create space within the school environment and curriculum for reflection, awe, wonder, insight and delight in God's creation.

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

The Christian values of care, love, respect, and self-worth are modelled consistently and effectively by adults in the school community, so that most pupils are fulfilling the school aim to '*share all that we can, work as hard as we can, care as much as we can, and achieve the*

best we can, in the love of Jesus Christ'. Pupils grow to be confident learners and are supportive of the school as a Church school. However, the link between values and Christian teaching and belief is not always made, so that pupils' ability to understand the Christian way of life and its distinctiveness is not fully realised. The effective procedures in school for behaviour management and building self-esteem, particularly '*golden time*', result in pupils who are willing to learn, develop a strong work ethic and appreciate their teachers' care and value of them. As one pupil said, '*Everyone matters here*'. The prefect system and the school council are effective in teaching democratic skills and involving pupils in decision making. Recent developments have been in relation to improving playground games and lunchtime facilities. Pupils are rightly proud of these. The recent change to experiential methods in religious education have resulted in some effective learning. As one pupil said, '*You don't take stuff in when it's boring – but our teachers make it fun*'. Pupils could describe the Passover from the Jewish tradition, with understanding. The recent '*robbery at the Abbey*' led to a much greater understanding of the symbolism and use of certain '*stolen*' Christian artefacts. Pupils freely express their ideas, such as a desire to have a school magazine again, and visit other places of worship and other cultures. They have much to offer within the school curriculum. They talked with enthusiasm about the drive for 'healthy eating' and were keen to become 'eco-friendly' as well. Opportunities for reflection and spiritual development are less well catered for, within the curriculum, school building and in the extensive grounds.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory.

Pupils have a clear understanding that the Church is central to the worship life of the school. They enjoy services in Polesworth Abbey and grow in their understanding of the Anglican tradition. They particularly enjoy worship when they are able to contribute themselves. This strategy is under-used. Parents are supportive at Christian festival times, when the whole school community come together in church, and when pupils take part in their own class assemblies in school. Most pupils have good attitudes to daily assemblies, particularly when there is drama, role-play, pupil participation, fun and laughter. Both the headteacher and Father Phillip are seen as inspirational leaders. In the assembly observed, the 'biscuit strategy' certainly conveyed the idea of temptation to every child spoken to! There is a lack of clarity between assembly and worship, so that understanding of the religious perspective in assembly is limited. The development of prayer across the school is inconsistent. Few pupils are empowered to use prayer, praise and ritual in their own lives as a source of inspiration and affirmation. The use of appropriate Anglican rituals in school worship, such as processing the Bible, introits and traditional Christian prayers is the next stage of development, providing greater links between Church services and school worship. 'Assembly for worship' clearly contributes to the inclusive and accepting ethos of the school and emphasizes the Christian principle that everyone is valued and deserves respect.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision of the school as a church school; namely through its links with the church and in modelling Christianity as a way of life. The effect of this vision is sound; its impact on pupils being limited by the lack of consistent, explicit links between lifestyle and Christian belief and teaching. Father Phillip is very supportive of the school and is instrumental in pupils' understanding of, and attitudes to, church. He guides the governing body with integrity. His principle that '*people work better together*' is lived out soundly within the governance of the school. Moving into monitoring and evaluating the school as a church school, with input from all its stakeholders is the next stage of development, so that priorities can be established with whole-school ownership and discernible outcomes. The Diocesan adviser has enabled religious education teaching to become more experiential, so that pupils willingly engage in activities, where they are given responsibility and are enabled to reflect, be creative and expressive. This is a good model for effective learning. The changes in staff, and staff responsibilities, although unsettling, provide opportunity for ownership of clear aims, expectations and good practice to underpin the curriculum and school life, so to realise pupils' academic, personal and spiritual potential.