

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Oakhill Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Oakhill,
Bath
BA3 5AQ

Diocese: Bath and Wells

Local authority: Somerset

Dates of inspection: 24 May 2007

School's unique reference number: 123771

Headteacher: Mr David Barlow

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Rosemary Bartlett NS 120

School context

Oakhill Church School serves the rural parishes of Oakhill and Ashwick, with a small number of pupils coming from other nearby villages. There are 126 pupils on roll. The school grounds have been increased in recent years to include a good sized field. The headteacher retires this term, after serving twenty five years, and a new appointment to the post has been made. Pupils' attainment on entry varies from year to year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Oakhill Church School as a Church of England school are good.

There are some outstanding features. The value given to each individual is reflected in the respect and friendliness shown by all members of the school community. The school has exceptionally close contacts with the local church and good links with both the diocese and the wider church.

Established strengths

- The very effective links between the school and church
- The professional commitment of the headteacher and senior leadership team
- The happiness and confidence of the pupils

Focus for development

- Further enhance the quality of collective worship through a review of the setting in which it takes place
- Enrich religious education through more visits to places of worship
- Continue to implement the programme for social and emotional aspects of learning

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

The school's Christian values have a strong impact on the personal development of the pupils. Their comments include: "Our teachers act as friends" and "School is a good start for life". The school has a positive, happy ethos in which every individual is valued. As a result, pupils enjoy school and show a well developed sense of responsibility. Respect for the individual and an appreciation of diversity are well fostered by the effective religious education and PSHE. The school council meets regularly and contributes well to positive changes in daily school life. These have included the creation of "buddy stops" in the playground for pupils wanting a friend to play with. The school is currently introducing additional materials to support social and emotional aspects of learning.

The school's strong musical tradition contributes very well to pupils' cultural development. A high percentage of pupils play a musical instrument. Musical appreciation is particularly

enhanced by occasions such as school's recent music festival. In RE pupils' study of Christianity is enriched by visits to the parish church, the local Methodist chapel and Wells cathedral. The effective cross curricular approach to RE strengthens pupils' knowledge and understanding. They learn about several world faiths and demonstrate a lively interest in different points of view. The school now plans to increase the opportunities for visits to other places of worship. Global awareness is fostered through citizenship studies and through the school's effective emphasis on attitudes of openness and empathy.

There are a very good variety of extra curricular activities, run by both staff and parents, which are well subscribed. Pupils themselves lead clubs which include animal and chess clubs. The acquisition of the adjacent field for recreational purposes has added considerably to pupils' quality of life. The beautiful millennium sensory garden is well used as a space for quiet conversation and reflection. It has also served as an ideal setting for outdoor theatre as seen in a much enjoyed production of Macbeth. The imaginative development of the school building to provide new classrooms and storage space has greatly enhanced school life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

There is a perceptible sense of stillness in the school's daily worship. This is a time clearly set apart from the busy life of the school. Pupils see worship as "a place to calm yourself down, where you can relax". They are exceptionally receptive to the well planned acts of daily worship. Content and resources are well matched to the age range of pupils present. Older pupils benefit from hearing the dramatic account of Pentecost, well illustrated by many lighted candles. Younger pupils are clearly touched by the story of Badger's Parting Gifts, which deals very sensitively with relationship and loss. Worship is generally held in the school hall. The school is now reviewing the setting for worship in order to further ensure the overall quality of the pupils' experience. Pupils benefit from the contribution to school worship made by the foundation governors. The Vicar is involved in planning for worship and once a month leads school worship in the church. Two other foundation governors also lead school worship once a month. The headteacher regularly reports on worship to the governing body and pupils' feedback is also invited. Two of the three aspects of collective worship identified for action in the last report have been well addressed. The third, namely the provision of a separate statement on worship in the parents' handbook, has yet to be implemented. Pupils benefit from a number of visiting leaders of worship such as the Rainbow Theatre Easter group and a Buddhist monk. Worship is enhanced by music performed by pupils and by the piano played for hymns. Pupils sing tunefully and with pleasure.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is good, with some outstanding features.

The school's strong links with the church and village give pupils a clear sense of belonging. The effective partnership between the headteacher and the vicar has a very positive impact on the life of the school. The head's passionate commitment to the school has created a strong sense of family and community which clearly benefits the present pupils. The very positive feedback from many former pupils and their families indicates that the headteacher's contribution has also helped many previous generations of pupils. The vicar is seen as a welcome friend by both staff and pupils alike. A recent Good Friday Road Show held in school was attended by nearly half the pupils who enjoyed workshops such as making Easter gardens. Church events are held on occasion in the school hall and the school uses the church for worship on special festivals. The vicar supports RE and school worship as well as providing pastoral support for the school community. The school also has good links with the local Methodist chapel. The school's good church links have been well demonstrated over recent years in the fine "altar windows" created by pupils for the Bath and Wells Show over a number of years.

Pupils also benefit from the school's close partnership with their families. Regular opportunities for school home contacts include effective parent surgeries, consultation evenings, weekly newsletters and pupil questionnaires. The school's strong sense of commitment to the community is exemplified in the evening walking club, led by staff for pupils and their families. The active PTA also contributes generously to the sense of community through events such as the recent Spring Ball, and to school resources.

The school's Christian values are clearly reflected in the good opportunities provided for staff development. Governors are supportive and involved in many aspects of school life. The school is exceptionally effective at fund raising for both local and international charities. All this is most ably and kindly orchestrated through the excellent leadership of the headteacher.

SIAS report May 2007 Oakhill Church of England Primary School, Oakhill, Bath BA3 5AQ