

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Rushton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Rushton Spencer  
Macclesfield  
SK11 OSG

#### Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire  
Date of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
Date of last inspection: March 2003  
School's unique reference number: 124272  
Headteacher: Mrs. Alyson Hurst  
Inspector's name: Mrs. Heather Peake

#### School context

Rushton Church of England School is a very small school of 24 pupils, taught in two classes. The school, situated in the village of Rushton Spencer, serves a rural area in the beautiful countryside of the Staffordshire Moorlands.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rushton School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Christian values underpin and permeate all areas of school life and learning, so the school lays the firm foundations of a Christian education for all its pupils. The children are happy and secure, enjoying many wonderful and exciting experiences which enable them to achieve their spiritual, moral and intellectual potential.

#### Established strengths

- The outstanding care, dedication and commitment of the Headteacher and her staff team
- The inspiration and enthusiasm of the Worship and RE co-ordinators
- The pastoral support and spiritual guidance of the Incumbent, Foundation Governor and Methodist Minister
- The clear Christian ethos which is supported by the school family

#### Focus for development

To build on the excellent links with the clergy and local schools to:

- Increase the number of shared services in local churches which celebrate all the major festivals in the Christian calendar
- to extend the popular summer Christian activity day into similar and more frequent events, for example an Easter workshop.

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

The Christian ethos is at the heart of school life and learning. It is highly visible within the school family where everyone is valued, and treated with justice, equality and respect. The exemplary relationships within the school community are characterised by daily Christian care, concern, help and understanding for each other, recently highlighted in the love and support given to a bereaved child. Pupils are kind, courteous and friendly, and older pupils care well for the younger ones. The 'Friendship Stop' introduced in the playground is a special place to go if a child wants to be included with other children. The pupils understand, and feel proud of, the fact that their school is a Church of England School, and shared examples of how it helps them to learn and live out the teachings of Jesus. They are very enthusiastic about ways they can help to make the school an even better place, and use the school council and eco-school committee to share and channel their ideas into action. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding; the teachers and the teaching assistant are excellent role models, have high expectations, and, in the children's words, 'make learning fun and exciting', so they have a significant impact on pupils' development. The school is exceptional in nourishing, encouraging and challenging the learners who are unusually confident in expressing their views and opinions, which are clearly and firmly rooted in

Christian teachings. Learners gain considerable spiritual and moral development and insight from opportunities and experiences in RE and PSHE, as well as in worship, through the inspiring work of the co-ordinators, clearly evident in lessons observed, schemes of work, planning, assessment and evaluations. Pupils have great opportunities to discover how other people live, and worship, both at home and abroad, which help them to appreciate the diversity of cultures, and encourage tolerance and respect in their own society, and in the wider world. The school supports several local, national and international charitable organisations, and regularly invite community friends to share in school life and learning. Christian symbols in and around the school, and the bright, stimulating and interactive RE displays, remind the school family and visitors of their special Anglican heritage, and the school's distinctive Christian character and purpose. The outdoor areas offer the school family quiet places where they are able to reflect with awe and wonder on the beauty of nature, somewhere to collect their thoughts, to be still and enjoy peace in a busy day.

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

Acts of collective worship occupy an important part in the daily life of the school and enhance spiritual growth. Sensitive and careful planning, recording and evaluation ensure experiences are age and ability appropriate. Introductory music and times for reflection, meditation, prayer and silence, create an atmosphere in which conversation with God is natural and meaningful. During worship times observed, the Lord's Prayer and the children's own prayers were shared in reverence and thanksgiving. The worship leader used a lighted candle on the Advent ring, and a warm welcome to create a feeling of calm and expectation. The Christian worship honoured the Anglican tradition as the vicar began with an 'action' prayer, Biblical references were used, and pupils shared in the discussion about the season of Advent and preparation for the coming of Christmas. Pupils were encouraged to identify symbols in school and church to illustrate this special festival in the Church's year. Opportunities for reflection and prayers at other times during the school day, included pupils take turns to read from a book of prayers, they have written themselves, at lunchtime. Pupils also enjoy singing a wide variety of songs of praise and love the new Come and Praise hymn books. The worship and RE co-ordinators also enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of Bible stories, Anglican symbols and liturgy, as demonstrated in their awareness of key Christian beliefs, Jesus' teaching, and festivals through the church year, as well as in pupils' spiritual and moral development. Staff attend and participate in worship and the teachers lead worship weekly. Pupils clearly articulated the importance of worship and the key Christian values it promotes, evident when talking to learners and throughout the school. The children are keen to participate in different aspects of collective worship and take active and creative roles in church services; at the time of the inspection they shared their excitement in preparing for the Christmas Carol service with two other local schools and churches in the benefice. The parish Church of St. Lawrence is used as a resource to support learning and local churches at Longsdon and Horton are shared places of worship for celebrations and festivals.

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

The headteacher gives a clear lead in how Christian values underpin the life and work of the school, and she is strongly supported by her enthusiastic and hardworking staff team. There are highly effective pastoral and spiritual links with the incumbent and foundation governor from St. Lawrence's Church, and the local Methodist minister from Rushton Methodist Chapel. The incumbent and the foundation governor help to ensure the Anglican traditions are maintained, and, together with the Methodist minister and staff, make Rushton Church of England School a Christian centre of learning. They encourage pupils and their families to join in Sunday worship, special festivals and celebrations, and are valued and respected for the positive contributions they make to worship and the governing body. The highly effective leadership and management team, together with the work of the PTA and the appreciation of supportive parents, alongside the dedicated and stable staff and active governing body, has led to a closely committed school family and positive home/ school/ community relationships, which reflect the Christian values and expectations of all working in partnership in this thriving church school.