

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Sherington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

Sherington
Newport Pagnell
MK16 9NF

Diocese of Oxford

LA: Buckinghamshire

Dates of inspection: 1 May 2007

Date of last inspection: 19 March 2001

School's Unique reference number: 110407

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Arlene Bourne

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

Context

Sherington School is a very small school with most pupils transferring from the village Pre-school. Pupil numbers and attainment on entry vary from year to year. The school has recently taken part in the Local Authority's re-organisation of the Age of Transfer across schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sherington Church of England Infant School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The school's Christian values are seen in the strong commitment of the head, staff and governors to the progress and development of all pupils. Pupils are reflective and confident because of the school's focus on skills for self evaluation and communication. The school has very good links with the local church, holding a vital place in its community.

Established strengths

- The shared vision and effective cooperation of head, staff and governors
- The exceptionally good opportunities for staff development
- The enrichment of pupils' learning through the very good use of the school grounds

Focus for development

- Develop planning for collective worship
- Establish monitoring of collective worship

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

This is because of the school's very good knowledge of the background, strengths and needs of each child and its effective commitment to providing pupils with a foundation for life. The school's very effective induction programme ensures a smooth transition into school for all the children. Their physical wellbeing is well developed through healthy eating and regular exercise. The commitment to pupils' safety is seen in the well run programme for cycle proficiency. Despite the small size of the school, pupils' social skills are very well honed. This is achieved through daily practice in communication skills and through the opportunities for both free and structured activities in playtimes. The recently introduced Learning Journals enable pupils to record their understanding of their own learning. Commenting on the growth of a moth, they say: "This moth took a long time to hatch. I have learned that we need to be patient". The opportunities for pupils to meet up with others from nearby schools effectively extend their social network. The value of friendship and connection is exemplified by the staff and by the school's close links with parents and members of the local community. Pupils feel secure and they appreciate the help they are given by adults, saying: "They show you what to do if you're a bit stuck". Through regular reinforcement of effort and achievement, such as the Golden Smart awards, pupils develop a clear moral sense. They develop increasing confidence through

meetings of the "School Voice". In this whole school assembly they are encouraged to express their views on aspects of school life and on possible ways to make improvements. Pupils benefit significantly from the supportive contribution to school activities made by many members of the local community. The pond, wild garden and outdoor classroom also provide excellent additional opportunities for teaching and learning. The creation of the vegetable plots enables pupils to appreciate the wonder of new life as seeds are planted and produce is harvested in due course. Pupils' cultural experience is extended through a good range of activities. These have included celebration of the Chinese New Year and visits to the theatre. As a result of meeting many visitors to the school pupils learn from a good variety of first hand contacts. These have included the representatives from the French community of Sameon, with which the village is twinned. Through religious education they are given a good understanding of Christianity. The parish church is a valuable resource for RE. Pupils enjoy learning about Christian symbols through their search for crosses in the church. They are effectively introduced to other major world faiths. Skilful teaching enables pupils to sense the significance of a spiritual life to many.

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

Pupils enjoy the well led daily school worship. The content and approach for worship are very well matched to the age range and abilities of the children. They are fully involved. This was seen in the "web of friendship" through which pupils were enabled to reflect on the importance of friendships. The web was effectively extended to include friends outside school, thus strongly nurturing the children's sense of community and self worth. Worship provides regular opportunities for quiet reflection, which pupils clearly value. Their comments include: "I feel calm when everybody is quiet". They respond thoughtfully when asked about prayer. They say "We can pray for God to do things". They discuss God as creator, and are also confident in holding different points of view. The Rector or Lay Reader leads a weekly act of school worship to which the children make a lively response. Pupils also benefit from the school's ecumenical approach, seen in the occasional contribution to worship by the Bridge Building Trust, much appreciated by the pupils. On special festivals such as Christmas and Harvest school worship is also celebrated in the parish church. These occasions are very well attended by pupils' families, followed with refreshments. The school has recently drawn up an effective framework for worship. It now intends to further develop planning and to establish a system of monitoring and evaluation for worship.

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

This is reflected in the vision shared by the headteacher, staff and governors, which so clearly guides management decisions and actions. The recent re-structuring of the school has necessitated creative and courageous leadership. The guiding principle underlying all recent developments has always been the welfare and benefit of the children, as well as concern for the well being of the whole school community. Christian values are at the heart of school life and of the mission statement, which is currently under review. The staff enjoy exceptionally good opportunities for professional development. These in turn bring clear benefits to the pupils both in the classroom and at lunchtimes. Pupils benefit greatly from the close links with other schools, especially because of the relatively small age bands. The school's good contacts with external organisations such as the Woodland Trust have provided additional resources. Parents, ex pupils, students and members alike express appreciation of the school's provision. This sense of connection is enabled by the very good channels of home/school communication. These include the clear, informative newsletters and Open Door sessions every half term. The school has close connections with the church through its personal contacts with clergy and church members. The Rector and Lay Reader provide pastoral support as well as contributing to school worship and RE. The school's vital part in the life of the local community is well illustrated in the shared website. Four of the aspects for development identified in the last inspection have been well addressed. The fifth, relating to collective worship has still to be met.