

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School

Stratford Drive  
Wooburn Green  
High Wycombe  
HP10 0QH

**Diocese: Oxford**

Local Authority :Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 22 November 2007

Date of last inspection: June 2003

School's Unique reference number: 110469

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Ruth Goddard

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Lyn Field 151

#### Context

The pupils in this large primary school come from a variety of social backgrounds. They are mostly White British with only a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. When children start school their abilities are generally above average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

The governors of the school support a curriculum that challenges pupils academically and spiritually. By the time they leave they have grown into 'giving people', able to take responsibility and make choices based on a clear framework of Christian values. The headteacher and her staff are outstanding role models in every aspect of their work.

#### Established strengths

- The partnership between the headteacher, vicar and chair of governors that gives clear direction to the school as a Christian community.
- The passion and commitment of the staff to achieving the best for each child
- The impact of music on the spiritual life of the school
- The quality of reflective and critical thinking in Religious Education

#### Focus for development

There are no significant areas for development

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

The principle that underpins the Christian ethos of the school is 'what you give, Christ gives back'. Pupils experience giving and sacrifice in practice. They learn that their efforts can improve the lives of others through their involvement with the Go-go Trust in Africa. The school is using creativity as a tool in helping children to achieve their best. Imagination workshops for the whole school are challenging children to develop their thinking skills using different media and to express themselves in a range of art forms. Relationships are excellent. Teachers and pupils work closely together and share the feelings of success and disappointment that are part of daily life. Everything the school does in shaping the curriculum and planning the indoor and outdoor environment has a clear purpose for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. For example, singing together captures what it means to belong to this community and pupils choose to join extra groups such as buskers or the gospel choir. Teachers have extremely high expectations for the quality of singing but the feelings it evokes are as important. They talk about having 'goose bumps moments' as a measure of how music moves them. The school has an excellent track record in helping children who have been disengaged with learning to flourish. The staff passionately believe that they cannot give up on a child and find sensitive ways to provide individual help whilst retaining the integrity of each child. This commitment to forgiveness and fresh start transfers to pupils. The school raises the aspirations of all pupils. They develop their own vision for how they might contribute to any community in which they find themselves as they grow up.

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

Worship is central to the school's identity as a Christian community. Children talk of prayer being more powerful when everyone joins together as one family. It is very clear that all teachers enjoy being actively involved alongside the children and are rarely absent. Worship is carefully structured using simple rituals that make a lasting impact on pupils. Each stage of worship has a real spiritual purpose. Reflection time, for example, refocuses everyone from lively debate or music towards prayer. It is a transition time that pupils clearly use to be alone with their own thoughts. The school draws on its strengths across the whole curriculum to help pupils make the most of worship. The outstanding nature of singing in the school means that the delivery of specifically Christian songs sets a spiritual atmosphere for worship that embraces everyone present. There is an unmistakable sense of joy in 'singing the Lord's praise'. Pupils bring to worship the same confidence to explore and question that they show in lessons and they enjoy lively and humorous debate with the vicar. The themes are challenging and relevant to contemporary society. The strong relationships that exist between church and school have created a safe, supportive environment in which pupils feel able to talk openly about their faith, explore doubts or express disbelief. Whatever their faith commitment, pupils are nurtured and affirmed.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

The standards that pupils achieve are well above average across the school. Reception children explain that Diwali is a festival of light and demonstrate with absolute delight, every detail of how it is celebrated. By Year 6 pupils engage in critical thinking and discuss subjects such as whether different creation stories might be compatible. They are confident and articulate in expressing opinions that are clearly their own although their written pieces do not always reflect the perception shown in their oral work. The school knows why standards are as high as they are and what it needs to do to improve further. It is right to identify reflective and critical thinking as a strength of RE. This is outstanding across the school and develops from the way teachers challenge pupils to think beyond factual knowledge and explore the implications of beliefs for different cultures. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Teachers have a good understanding of how well pupils are progressing and shape tasks accordingly. In the most successful lessons one idea builds rapidly on another and teachers plan time for pupils to explore ideas through music, poetry and art. This approach helps pupils to stand back and reflect on the values of modern society. In the school context, they describe how Christian values look in the everyday life of the school and offer well-argued suggestions for which Bible stories best exemplify these values. The skills they develop in RE ensure they make the most of opportunities for spiritual and moral development in other subjects. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject reflecting the real enthusiasm of the staff for RE.

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

The headteacher, the chair of governors and the vicar all clearly articulate how Christian values shape the direction of the school and they hold themselves accountable to this vision. There is clear evidence that what the school does on a daily basis is characterised by a Christian understanding of service, sacrifice and compassion. Governors keep a close watch that the curriculum is broad and rich enough for pupils to meet spiritual as well as academic challenges and they check that there is equity of access for all children. This same balance is mirrored in the attention given to the wellbeing and the professional development of staff. The leadership of the school is strong because it is rooted in the partnership with the church and is fully supported by an enthusiastic staff team. The Christian character of the school is constantly evolving in response to a changing world and the needs of families. There is a reflective culture and governors, staff, parents and pupils constantly play their part in this. Any issues raised are immediately addressed so strategic planning is about exploring more deeply the ideals to which this school aspires.