

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Ebbe's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Whitehouse Road

Oxford

OX1 4NA

#### Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 13 March 2008

Date of last inspection: January 2002

School's Unique reference number: 123212

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Burton

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: The Rev'd Richard Peers 125

#### Context

St Ebbe's is an average sized, over-subscribed primary school not far from Oxford city centre but situated in pleasant river surroundings. It serves an extremely mixed community with children from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds. A significant number of children come from minority ethnic communities and a variety of faith communities.

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

This is an astounding school which is outstanding in every way and expresses the commitment of the Church of England to serve the whole community in every aspect of its life. Warmth and happiness permeate everything about the school and all the staff and pupils enabling everyone to succeed.

#### Established strengths

- The inclusive nature of the school serving the whole community
- The happiness of the school and all members of the community
- The RE teaching and assessment of progress in RE
- The outstanding quality of leadership in the school notably the Head and Deputy, the Chair of the Governing Body and the RE Subject Leader

#### Focus for development

- To enable staff to recognise and enable the spiritual development of pupils especially by using symbol and ritual

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

Pupils describe their school as 'fantastic' and they are right. This is a school where the headteacher shares leadership in an exemplary way and where the warmth of her personality enables everyone to thrive in an atmosphere of happiness and joy. Pupils are confident and happy and achieve well because they feel loved and cared for in a safe, stimulating environment. Displays around the school and in every classroom are outstanding. Many displays engage with the deepest places of human emotion and allow the expression of the full range of experience including the sad and the tragic as well as the joyful and happy.

This is a creative, dynamic school one pupil excitedly saying that she 'never knew what to expect next'. Parents are welcomed onto the site and clearly are very relaxed and comfortable being in school at the beginning of the day. A member of staff greets parents and carers at the gate and picks up questions and issues. At the beginning of the school day the building is fragrant with the aroma of essential oils and the sound of a variety of music played in classrooms to welcome pupils.

The inclusive nature of the Anglican tradition is especially evident in the life of this school. Muslim

pupils speak of how much they enjoy being at the school and feel part of the community. Room is set aside for pupils at lunchtimes during Ramadan and pupils know that being part of a school with people of many faith traditions and none is part of what makes it a special place, one pupil said passionately 'being different isn't a bad thing'.

Inclusion is further demonstrated in the high quality of special needs provision and the praise lavished on the SENCO by parents. Pupils say that 'no one is ever left out' and that 'everyone gets the help they need'. They recognise this as a sign of the school's belief that God loves everyone.

The school makes outstanding use of the cultural richness around them and pupils are able to talk about many of the religious buildings in Oxford and their significance.

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

Collective Worship is given absolute priority in the life of the school. It is well prepared and enables pupils to have a very strong sense of doing something together. Christian leaders from the local churches are used very effectively to present the Christian faith in interesting ways. An outstanding act of worship seen extended the idea of healthy living by making the connection between 'superfoods' and the Bible as God's 'superfood' for us. Worship always includes a prayer and often a time of reflection or quiet. However, pupils were not very able to talk about the meaning of prayer, to say how they could pray for those in need at school or describe their experience of God or how we could have a relationship with God or Jesus.

The quality of singing is outstanding and pupils have sung at diocesan events as well as in their parish church. Pupils can name the diocesan cathedral and know that it was the 'bishop's church'. They could explain that being a Church of England school means being part of a wider Christian community and links them with Christians throughout the world.

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

Standards in RE are extremely high and levels are used well to track pupil progress including a mid-year check. The subject co-ordinator and the specialist teacher have an outstanding grasp of their subject and its needs. They are able to articulate how levelling is informing discussion and have worked hard to introduce the new agreed syllabus and have ensured that the school delivers RE with a distinctively Anglican element. The library is extremely well resourced and pupils know that they can find much information about the world's religions as well as books that help them understand and express their own emotions and experiences.

Pupils enjoy RE and rightly think they are very well taught in the subject. The Scheme of Work is outstanding and lesson planning is very well done to address clear, levelled learning objectives. Teaching seen in RE was outstanding. One lesson enabled pupils of all preferred learning styles to access the story of Israel's Exodus from Egypt. Personal experience, extended silent reflection, drawing, music and drama were all used in a very impressive way to express the experience of release from captivity. In another outstanding lesson pupils were looking at how faith had inspired people, among other figures pupils had chosen to research Rastafarian Bob Marley and the Muslim hip-hop singer Lupe Fiasco. They were able to talk with considerable maturity about why they had chosen these figures and how faith had affected their lives.

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

This is an outstandingly well led school. Governors describe the head as 'stunning'. Leadership is very well shared and decision making processes are very mature. The head teacher brings her profound warmth and calmness to her work which enables all members of the community to flourish. Pupils describe the head as someone they can talk to 'whenever they want' as 'really good at listening' and 'able to put herself in other people's position so she knows what they need'. Links with the parish church and the founding parish are very good and the school benefits from the variety of additional personnel and skills brought to it by these. A prayer group meets in school regularly and the head is very good at informing it of needs for prayer. The incumbent of the parish church is very able to articulate a vision for the school in building bridges between faith and daily life and developing art as a way of accessing spirituality.

Parents speak very positively about the school and believe they are fortunate that their children attend this church school. They are very happy with the links with the local churches and with the

work done by Governors recently to ensure that the worship is inclusive and Christian. They particularly highlight the 'Godly Play' material as a positive way the school expresses its Christian ethos. Parents also speak very appreciatively of the seriousness with which RE is taken in the school and the stimulating and creative ways used to deliver the RE curriculum.

The Governing Body has an extremely rich variety of skills and experience to draw on and is very well led by its Chair. Foundation Governors are working very well to evaluate the school's worship and to ensure that the worship is thoroughly Christian and expresses Christianity accurately and in an inclusive way. Governors are working very hard to build cohesion in the school and the local community. An amazing five Governors recently attended Local Authority training on developing links with the Muslim community and Governors are committed not only to reaching out but enabling members of all faith communities to reach into the life of the school.

SIAS report March 2008, St Ebbe's Church of England Aided Primary School, Oxford, OX1 4NA