

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St. Edburg's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary school

Cemetery Road

Bicester

OX26 6BB

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 23rd April 2008

Date of last inspection: May 2004

School's Unique reference number: 123188

Name of Headteacher: Damian Booth

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Alan Thornsby 137

Context

St. Edburg's is a small primary school situated in an area that has some socio-economic disadvantages. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is above average, most of these with social, emotional or behavioural needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Edburg's as a Church of England school are good

St. Edburg's is a good school with many outstanding features that through its caring ethos and commitment to the development of the whole child provides an effective learning situation securely based on Christian values.

Established strengths

- The high levels of pastoral care for individuals.
- The commitment to meeting the academic and spiritual needs of everyone in school.
- The vision of the school and clear direction for future development

Focus for development

- Raise standards in religious education by the use of creative teaching
- Develop monitoring and evaluation procedures for worship to inform future planning

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

The school has a very welcoming and caring ethos. All children know they are safe in school and explain 'we are one big family and look after each other'. This results in self respect and respect for other people and property. Relationships throughout the whole community are good. Pupils know they may share their worries or fears in confidence by using the 'worries box' or in circle time. The school provides sensitive support for pupils and parents during times of difficulty. There are good relationships with parents reinforced, for example, by the sharing of the value of the month. This means the value is demonstrated at home as well as at school. Rigorous target setting, assessment and tracking informs pupil progress. They have very positive attitudes to work describing how 'learning is fun'. Pupils understand the benefits and reasons for the behaviour and rewards systems, and enjoy sharing in the success of their friends. They use the 'friendship book' to record random acts of kindness they have received. They extend their responsibility to each other by being 'playground pals' or by being a member of the school council. An outstanding feature of this school is the impact of Godly Play on pupils' spiritual development and Biblical knowledge. This is led by a committed teaching assistant. The benefits of this have resulted in every class sharing Godly play every half term. Although art and language are strengths of the school in promoting spirituality, the school does not make sufficient use of reflective questions in displays to engage other people's reactions. Involvement in the Comenius project raises pupils understanding of other cultures, especially their festivals.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship has a high profile in the school as a means of coming together to reflect. Worship begins with a meaningful exchange of Anglican greetings and responses and with appropriate music helps create a reflective atmosphere. Acapella singing enhances the spiritual dimension of the act of worship. Worship is currently based on a skeletal framework of values and Biblical teaching. There is currently no formal monitoring or evaluation but the school has identified in its action plan the need for governing body involvement in this. Although worship is often a time to explore and put into action the value of the month, it is also a time to share Bible stories and their message. Bible stories are made meaningful to pupils by being related to their own experiences. For example, St George's Day was skilfully linked to the story of Jesus and Peter walking on the water and to pupils having faith when facing their own challenges. Prayer has a high profile in school, introduced by the lighting of a candle to invite the presence of Jesus. Pupils recite the Lord's Prayer and school prayer and understand their significance to their own lives. Pupils have the opportunities to share prayers on the prayer tree, and newsletters home invite prayer for the school. The impact of worship on pupils is seen in the way they explain that the stories of Jesus 'teach us how to be a good person.' The church is used for festival services and pupils' awareness of being a part of a worshipping community is reflected in the comment 'we take the church to older people who cannot get to church when we sing for them'.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The new co-ordinator has identified an action plan based on work scrutiny, lesson observations and pupil questionnaires, to revitalise the profile of religious education. There is already a secure base on which to build. Although standards are presently in line with other core subjects the school has identified the need to raise standards by a more challenging and creative cross-curricular approach. Teaching is often good because teachers build on previous knowledge, have a good rapport with pupils and use effective questioning techniques. Teaching assistants are effectively used to support and maintain the concentration of some pupils. Pupils develop their ideas and explore big questions because of the opportunities they have for paired and small group discussions. Teachers often use comments in marking to acknowledge achievements or to suggest further thinking. Many pupils respond in writing to these. Pupils are gaining a sound knowledge of Christianity and develop their understanding of other religions by comparing common features. This gives them confidence to explain 'just because we believe something different, we can still be friends and I don't see why the whole world can't be the same'.

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

The head successfully communicates and nurtures his vision for 'a quality education to prepare pupils for life, within a Christian ethos'. This has created a shared leadership and embedded structures for development. This has allowed the head to work as an associate head in a local community school as a part of the school's Christian service to the community. Everyone is a member of a team that recognises and values the strengths of individuals. This has resulted, for example in staff and pupils recognising the values of Godly Play and circle time and these becoming key features of the school. Foundation governors monitor the spiritual life of the school and explore initiatives in relation to Christian values. Commitment to Christian values has enabled all stakeholders to be involved in self-assessment, and given the governing body the opportunity to create action plans that will guide the school in its future development. The school has clearly demonstrated a good capacity for further development. Parents value the school and are proud of its impact on the academic and personal development of pupils.