

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Church Lane,
Ufton Nervet,
Reading,
Berkshire
RG7 4HH

Diocese of Oxford

LA: West Berkshire

Date of inspection: 7.1.2008

Date of last inspection: 16.6.2003

School's Unique reference number: 110021

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Beverley Williams

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Mrs June Hardcastle NS 400

Context

This small primary school of 113 pupils serves a rural area. Almost all pupils have white British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below that of most schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet as a Church of England school are good.

An overtly Christian ethos permeates the school with Christian principles firmly embedded in the daily practice of school life. A strong family atmosphere ensures that parents, pupils, staff and governors all feel valued.

Established strengths

- The outstanding quality of leadership provided by the head teacher and the support of the Governors
- The commitment of the head, staff and governing body to promoting a distinctive Christian vision for the school
- High standards of behaviour throughout the school

Focus for development

- Pupils to learn the Lord's Prayer and its meaning, and to use it regularly in worship
- Establish strategies for evaluating the quality of Collective Worship and the impact it has on the school community
- Establish strategies for evaluating Religious Education, in order to continuously monitor the quality of teaching and learning

The school through its

distinctive Christian character is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

In the entrance hall to the school there is a large plaque which says "At the heart of our school is the Christian belief that each one of us is precious in the sight of God." These sentiments are seen lived out in every part of school life, where there is a culture of encouragement based on respect and care. A parent spoke of this, saying "The children

have confidence in what is right and this equips them to deal with life.” The Playground Friends scheme fosters a caring environment, enabling children of all ages to make friends and learn how to maintain and repair relationships. This small school engenders a family atmosphere through activities such as mixed age group Golden Time, that has well thought out and teacher-led activities such as parachute games and cooking. At lunch time the whole school eats together at mixed age group tables. A grace is said, each time the prayer is chosen from the Grace Tree, from whose branches hang prayers written by the children. A year 5 boy said “We know everyone in our school and we look after each other.” Pupils help with fund raising, such as the Christian Aid Tea Party. A member of the school council summed up all the charity fund raising, saying “We not only raise money but learn about the needs of others.” Parents speak of the school as quick to resolve difficulties and bringing out the best in every child. “I haven’t been disappointed in any way” is a typical comment.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship has an important place in the life of the school. It is carefully planned and linked to the key Christian festivals, which is familiarising the pupils with the Church’s liturgical year. Everyone joins in with a prayer at the lighting of the candle, signalling the start of worship and an air of anticipation can be felt. Pictures and a variety of artefacts give a visual focus alongside the candle. Worship evokes a positive response, with pupils listening attentively and some contributing ideas out of their own experiences. Times of reflection are built into worship and introduced in a way which enables adults and children alike to think about how they can apply the teaching of the story to their own lives. The school uses the church building for some festivals, and this is aiding the children in their wider understanding of worship. There is only informal evaluation of individual acts of worship and of the overall programme. The Lord’s Prayer is not regularly said and there has not been teaching about its meaning and significance.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Skilfully led lessons advance children’s understanding as the lessons progress. Teacher’s carefully worded questions keep the children focussed on the core questions for the lesson. Power Point images, with evocative music, encourage spiritual development through awe and wonder. In upper key stage 2 understanding of other faiths is promoted, for example through comparing creation stories. Lessons have well planned opportunities for moral development through partner work, discussing how to make choices and the importance of new beginnings. Work in the Foundation Stage is also well planned. Lists of questions for each unit of work are designed to develop emotional intelligence as well as familiarise these young children with faith stories. Role play forms a large part of the Foundation Stage religious education activities. For example, at Christmas they built a stable out of large blocks and straw. The school is seeking to raise the profile of R.E. through activities such as a Key Stage 2 Christian Art Week. However, the school is at early stages of developing formal criteria on which to base its assessment of pupils’ learning and confirm their levels of attainment.

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

This school has confidence in its church status. After a long period when links with the Parish Church were tenuous, the leadership and management have embarked on what one of them describes as a “strengthening journey”. Staff and governors have participated in Diocesan training about the distinctive nature of church schools, enabling them to reflect on their roles. Governors are often present in school, writing up records of their visits and

making observations and evaluations. They are recognising areas which call for improvement, such as defining and making explicit the values embedded in the Mission Statement and, with the head teacher, establishing systems to address these issues. The parish Licensed Lay Minister is frequently in school, providing not only a point of contact but a two way supportive link between church and school. The latest parish magazine contains an article from a governor about events in school and poems on Remembrance Sunday, written by pupils. The head teacher and a governor are making themselves available to host a regular Parent's Forum, to enable parents to be express their views and to be assured that they are listened to and valued. The recently established Quiet Garden acknowledges the need for adults and children alike to have a space for quiet reflection and is another example of the way in which the leadership and management of the school are developing ways of ministering to the whole community.

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