

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Sunningwell Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,**

Dark Lane,  
Sunningwell,  
Abingdon,  
OX13 6RE

#### **Diocese of Oxford**

Local Authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2008

Date of last inspection: 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2002

School's Unique reference number: 123161

Name of Headteacher: Mr. Simon Handley

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Rev'd Jan Fielden (108)

#### **Context**

Sunningwell Church of England School is a small rural school with three mixed-age classes. Approximately 40% of the pupils are from service families from the nearby base, so mobility is high. Few pupils actually live in the quiet small village of Sunningwell; many come from outside the catchment area.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sunningwell as a Church of England school are good.**

Christian values form the foundation of this school's life, where its mission statement is lived and experienced. These values are especially reflected in the relationships across the school community and in the inspirational leadership of the Head. The importance placed on the individuality of all pupils is at the heart of all learning and teaching in this school.

#### **Established strengths**

- The outstanding leadership of the Head and the support of a dedicated staff.
- The open and trusting relationships between all members of the school community that results from the school's ethos.
- The emphasis placed on the nurture and development of each individual child.
- The quality of, and importance attached to, collective worship and its positive impact on pupils.

#### **Focus for development**

- To extend and develop the links with the church community and the Vicar.

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

The Christian ethos of the school permeates every aspect of school life, including documentation, relationships, behaviour, and classroom practice. The development of the whole child is of paramount importance, consequently all pupils feel valued, special and part of a supportive community. The children care for each other, particularly older pupils who have regular responsibility for the younger ones. Pupils know how and why, they should support and help pupils with behaviour problems or who find socialising difficult. One child commented that school was like a big family where everyone watches out for each other. Although only a small number of pupils have a different faith background, they know their beliefs are respected and they enjoy sharing them with other pupils. Staff model excellent relationships, and relationships between pupils and adults are relaxed and friendly, yet pupils know they are expected to work hard and fulfil their potential. Pupil's spiritual and moral development is excellent; older pupils can speak clearly about Christian values and their concerns for each other and the wider world through involvement in a number of local and national charities such as Mosquito nets for Uganda, Helen House Hospice,

Children in Need and a number of others. Pupils raise money for, and write to children in Uganda.

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

Collective worship has a priority place in the school day, and plays a vital role in the spiritual and moral development of the pupils, as well as being the key to the pupil's knowledge and understanding of Christianity. One Year 6 pupil is now enquiring about Baptism as a result of her growth in faith through her experiences in school. Pupils are enthusiastic about collective worship, saying that it is a time to "stop and think, and be together". Pupils enjoy a rich diet of Old and New Testament stories which are often related to value themes, and are told enthusiastically and imaginatively by the Head. Pupils readily respond to questions and happily contribute their thoughts and feelings, and value time for reflection and prayer. Pupils from other faiths are happy to attend collective worship and join in with parts that they feel comfortable with. Staff also value this time as they regularly attend, together with teaching assistants reinforcing to the pupils, the importance attached to these times. Major Christian festivals are celebrated in church together with parents who encourage this link, and the Vicar leads assemblies occasionally.

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

The headteacher gives inspiring and purposeful Christian leadership to the daily life of the school, ably supported by a good leadership team and active, interested Governors, a number of whom have links with the church and who report to the Parochial Church Council. The Foundation Governor and the Chair of Governors (a church warden) regularly visit the school and are aware of, and monitor the ethos of the school. The wider church community has limited active involvement in the life of the school, but provides a Bible to every Year 6 child on leaving school. The Christian ethos of the school is very clearly stated in the mission statement and in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy statement, both of which can be seen in practice in the school, especially through the quality of the relationships. The headteacher works hard at enabling the whole school community to feel ownership of the school with positive results. Children refer to their community as "Sunningwell United". Parents praise the after school activities which are provided, giving the children a breadth of experiences. A parent spoke positively about how the strong Christian ethos of the school made a difference to the way pupils related and responded to each other. A Friends Association, mostly made up of parents, but not exclusively, support the school financially and in other ways, in order to effectively enhance pupils' learning. Village and school are developing a Spinney of which the pupils speak with enthusiasm and knowledge. When completed this will benefit both communities. Parents speak of the dedication of staff, and their support of all pupils. Parents are kept informed through newsletters and their views are sought annually through questionnaires concerning such matters as transport, after-school clubs and links with the church. Governors take account of parents' views.