National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Walton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Meadow Lane,
Walton, Street,
Somerset.
BA169LA

Diocese: Bath & Wells

Local authority: Somerset County
Dates of inspection: 3lst March, 2008
Date of last inspection: March 2005
School's unique reference number: 123776
Headteacher: Rachel Toal
Inspector's name and number: Rev. John Angle - 119

School context

Walton Church of England Primary School has 144 pupils in five classes. Most pupils come from the village of Walton, a few from the surrounding area. The school is in a pleasant rural environment with excellent facilities and is an integral and appreciated part of the local community. There have been many staff changes in recent years but the school is now entering a period of stability. The headteacher took up her post in January, 2008.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Walton Church of England Primary School as a Church school are good

There is a strong, Christian ethos which permeates all aspects of the school's life. The personal development and behaviour of pupils is excellent. There is high quality care and concern by the staff for the "whole child" – body, mind and spirit. The school, as it responds to visionary leadership and management's well thought out and forward thinking plans, has the capacity for exciting and effective improvements and changes and could become an outstanding church school.

Established strengths

- Strong, enthusiastic and sensitive leadership
- A growing and effective Christian ethos
- A caring, welcoming and friendly family atmosphere
- A strong sense of community

Focus for development

- Continue to strengthen and develop the Christian ethos and practice of the school as set out in the current school development plan
- Evaluate the effectiveness of this and incorporate further steps in the new school development plan.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, makes good provision to meet the needs of all learners.

The school aims, its mission statement and many of its policies reflect the school's Christian ethos statement. Parents are confident that the inclusive nature of the school caters extremely well for all children, whatever their ability, interests or needs. Children enjoy coming to school. An "open door" policy, SEN surgeries and excellent induction procedures for children help to ensure the school is a warm, friendly and welcoming place to be.

Children feel safe in school and are given positive encouragement to express their views and contribute to the life of the school. Teachers know the pupils and as one parent commented, “the children matter to the teachers, nothing is too much trouble for them!”. Children’s successes are celebrated through the “Stars of Walton” displays and the weekly good manners award. The school’s commitment to the Healthy Schools and Active Mark awards together with pupils being given time for reflection and thought in circle time and collective worship ensures there is a holistic development of the child – physically, mentally and spiritually. Partnerships with the parish, the diocese and (for older children) the Glastonbury Trust further reinforce excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Children treat each other with honesty, trust and with a sense of fairness which all reflect the distinctive Christian values of the school. Behaviour is excellent. Children have a good sense of right and wrong. Disputes are dealt with fairly by staff who have a trusting and supporting relationship with the pupils which mirrors their own relationships. Staff are excellent role models. Older pupils support younger children and all pupils show empathy and work and live together in a collaborative and co-operative way. Children enthusiastically support local and international charities. The concept of “each day is a fresh start” and a concentration on a range of other values ensures pupils, in a simple but effective way, begin to understand some of the key Christian concepts of repentance, forgiveness and grace. The provision of “sacred spaces” in the school and displays of Christian symbols and the Christian story ensure that a focus on children’s spiritual and moral development is continually evident in the learning environment.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship plays an important part in the life of the school. The school’s policy for collective worship has excellent, clear, relevant and focussed aims and includes the bold objective of “teaching children how to worship”. “Sacred Spaces” are established as a focus for both whole school worship and class worship. Good use is made of symbols and music. Pupils particularly enjoy “real life” stories. Stories from a variety of cultures are integrated into the themes for worship. Children listen well, are keen to participate and enjoy singing and sharing in prayers. Most children know the Lord’s Prayer by heart but many, as yet, are not fully confident to explain it. Opportunities are given for reflection, and times of worship encourage a sense of calmness and thoughtfulness. Aspects of collective worship are related to other areas of the curriculum. Links are made with the local parish and the diocese. The vicar and other parishioners visit school. The school visits the local church at special times but pupils’ understanding of Anglican belief and practice is limited. Most parents join in collective worship on special occasions. Not all staff attend the occasions of whole school worship and so a sense of the school as a united worshipping community is lost. Governors undertake some evaluation of this aspect of school life but more systematic evaluation, particularly involving the children should be undertaken. Plans are already in place to involve children more in planning collective worship. Attempts are also being made to bring a greater variety of presentation – particularly using drama - to acts of collective worship. One the priorities in the school development plan is “reviving and refreshing” the practice of collective worship. The plans already in place will be effective in bringing about significant improvements.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are good.

The head is enthusiastic to promote a distinctive Christian vision for the school. The staff and governers are keen to continue to develop and strengthen the Christian ethos and practices of the school and this is one of the priorities in the school development plan. . The school’s Christian foundation is highlighted in all documentation. The need to support the Christian ethos of the school is made clear at all staff interviews and during induction processes to both parents and pupils. The Head and foundation governors have recently attended several Diocesan training opportunities and have a clear awareness of their church school’s current weaknesses and strengths. Careful evaluation and assessment of parental questionnaires

and pupils comments in the school council is underway with a view to strengthening further the school's Christian distinctiveness. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership in Religious Education and the continuation of excellent teaching and learning will further enhance the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Under the Head's enthusiastic leadership, support in establishing Christian values and principles is being given by the Diocese, local clergy, the Open Book Bible Group and through the church led Monday Club. The school is being led and managed in an effective forward looking manner to ensure steady and strong improvements in the future. The school consequently has the capacity to move forward to become an outstanding church school.

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