

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Weston Turville Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,

Main Street,
Weston Turville,
Aylesbury
HP22 5RW

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 27 March 2008

Date of last inspection: 10-14 May 2004

School's Unique reference number:

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Karen Brooks

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Mr John Beardsmore 106

Context

This is a one-form entry primary school serving the ecclesiastical parish of Weston Turville. It changed from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided status in 2003.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Weston Turville Church of England VA School as a Church of England school are good.

Christian values are firmly embedded in its ethos and put into practice in all aspects of its work, yet it is sensitive to the views of those of other faiths and of none.

Established strengths

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, well supported by the governing body and the senior leadership team
- Very effective teaching and high standards of pupil achievement in religious education
- Close and productive relationships with the local church
- A high quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and among pupils
- Good, often excellent, behaviour by pupils, together with an awareness of the needs of others

Focus for development

- To work towards the targets which the school has set itself in its improvement plan, to strengthen further its distinctive character as a church school
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The school through its distinctive Christian character is good at meeting the needs of all learners

The Christian character of the school, expressed in the Vision Statement which greets visitors in the entrance lobby, is evident in all aspects of the school's life and work. Relationships between staff and pupils are characterised by a genuine, caring concern for the individual. Children feel valued, and are proud that their achievements, whatever their gifts and abilities, are regularly celebrated, both in class and with the whole school. They are very happy at school. They appreciate the way the school seeks everyone's views and – most importantly – takes these into account through the thoughtfully devised process of the School Council. Pupils of all ages and abilities are confident of expressing their opinions and are remarkably mature in discussing moral issues and religious beliefs. The school is clear on its Christian stance but is careful not to indoctrinate: pupils are encouraged to express their own ideas, even if these are not orthodox, provided they are genuinely held. The pupils' attitudes towards one another reflect those of the staff. They believe, like their parents, that relationships between pupils are good and they particularly enjoy the "buddy" system, whereby older children take younger ones under their wing

at play times and make sure they are not alone. If they do fall out with other children, they know that they can also turn for help from an adult, either a member of staff, or the curate, who visits the school very regularly and acts as an independent counsellor.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Worship takes place daily and occupies an important place in the life of the school. It is explicitly Christian in character but the school is sensitive to the feelings of those who are not adherents of the Christian faith, for example by inviting children to take part in prayer but not requiring them to do so. Acts of worship are well planned and their quality is evaluated in a structured way. They are held in a calm and reverent atmosphere and music and symbols are well used to encourage reflection. Pupils behave well and many take an active part. For example at one act of worship, the whole school sat in silence round a central worship table containing figures representing the Easter story. After an introduction by the headteacher, several children came to the table one by one, lit a candle and then said a prayer which they had written themselves. The other pupils listened attentively. Pupils also took a leading role in the main Easter service, rehearsed during the inspection and held the following day in the parish church. The quality of their singing was outstanding, reflecting both the high standards of choral work in the school and the children's enthusiasm. Close links with the parish church and regular involvement of the clergy in acts of worship help to deepen the pupils' understanding of the school's Anglican heritage. Pupils say that they most enjoy the class assemblies, where they themselves have maximum input, and that they prefer acts of worship where pupils are active. Although worship in the school has many good features, the school has identified this as an area for development in its improvement plan. It has acquired new resources to enliven worship and is responding to the pupils' wish, expressed through the school council, for more of them to be actively involved in planning and taking part in worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Religious education occupies an important place in the curriculum of the school and this is recognised and supported by the governors, staff and parents. It is very well organized, planned and monitored by the subject leader, who is the headteacher. The school uses the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus, which emphasises the importance of Christianity but enables the pupils to develop an understanding of other faiths. The subject is taught by class teachers, who have undertaken training in teaching the subject, so that their teaching is now more confident and knowledgeable. The monitoring of religious education teaching, confirmed by observation during the inspection, indicates that its quality is good, in line with the teaching in other subjects. Pupils respond well to this teaching (some said "it is fun") and reach standards comparable with those they achieve in other subjects, as can be seen in the written work of pupils of all levels of ability. At best, they produce outstanding work. In a Year 6 lesson for example, building on previous learning, pupils discussed aspects of Hindu beliefs, with cross-references to Christian beliefs, before applying these principles to modern moral issues. They were fully engaged in pair, group and whole class discussion and some of their responses showed a considerable degree of mature insight. Relationships between teacher and class were excellent and the teaching was stimulating and skilfully geared to the different levels of ability, so that all made progress. Parents appreciate how well their children have grasped religious concepts. Sometimes pupils reveal their understanding in surprising ways: some children from the Reception class were discovered building an Easter scene with building blocks; not only could they tell the Easter story but they could explain why there were only eleven in their group of disciples!

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

The headteacher provides extremely effective leadership. She has a very clear vision of the school as an embodiment of Christian ideals in education and an equally clear understanding of how this should be put into practice. The staff and the governors share this vision and have an excellent working relationship with the headteacher. The school enjoys close links with the local

community, especially the local church. There is much evidence of the effectiveness of the school's Christian ethos yet it remains an open and inclusive school. An important factor in the school's success is its determination constantly to question its own performance and actively to seek the honest views of all involved, including staff, governors, parents and pupils. This is done systematically and the results built into the school improvement plan. The pupils especially really value the fact that their views are taken into account and acted upon. One result of the school's self-evaluation is its decision to seek to make its Christian ethos even more explicit. Another is its emphasis (seen as part of its Christian mission) on sustainability, which has had the effect of raising the pupils' awareness of the importance of using the earth's resources responsibly.

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