

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Wheatley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Littleworth Road,
Wheatley
Oxfordshire,
OX33 1NN

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 26th March 2008

Date of last inspection: 17th – 21st June 2002

School's Unique reference number: 123122

Name of Headteacher: Ms Joan Morters

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Lynne Chillingworth 429

Context

Wheatley Church of England Primary School is larger than the average primary school. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wheatley Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Christian values underpin all aspects of the life of this school, which provides a caring ethos in which pupils are nurtured, feel happy and secure, and become confident individuals. There is a warm, friendly and welcoming ethos.

Established strengths

- The happy, enthusiastic and articulate pupils who are proud of their school
- Strong relationships between pupils, parents and staff
- Supportive links with the local churches
- The sensitive leadership of the headteacher in strengthening links with the local church and in beginning to raise the profile of the school as a church school

Focus for development

- Foundation Governors should develop self evaluation of the distinctive character and effectiveness of Wheatley as a church school and ensure outcomes inform strategic planning
- Develop the centrality of collective worship in the life of the school, ensuring consistency, particularly in class based worship
- Ensure the new Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education is fully implemented including development of staff training, systems for assessment, monitoring and evaluation

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

The work of the school is clearly underpinned by implicit Christian values that support pupils' spiritual, moral and personal development. Pupils explain their school is a church school because "we believe in God." The headteacher is well supported by her staff in promoting these values, providing good role models for the children. Relationships are strong enabling pupils to enjoy coming to school and to feel safe and secure. Parents confirm that the school is warm, friendly and welcoming and that the staff know the pupils well and "always have time to listen." They say pupils develop into confident, caring individuals. The "Buddy Bus Stop" successfully enables lonely children to be included at playtimes. The excellent relationship with the special school that shares the site is a strong feature of the school. Pupils integrate well in some lessons and play happily together in the extensive, well kept and interesting grounds. Pupils demonstrate care and compassion saying they are good friends with the

children from the special school. Pupils' make good progress in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and satisfactory progress in key Stage 2. Overall standards are above average. Pupils take seriously their responsibility to look after their environment, enthusiastically explaining that they recycle paper to "save the trees" and "Eco Monitors remind them to turn off the lights." Pupils' developing understanding of giving is demonstrated through their enthusiasm for raising funds for Barnardos through the "Bean Stalk Challenge", proudly announcing they had raised £899.04. Parents confirmed that the Samaritan's Purse shoebox appeal had helped their children to "think about a child who doesn't have anything." Pupils' self worth is strong because achievements are valued and celebrated.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

The daily act of collective worship is planned to be accessible to the age and understanding of the pupils in a variety of large and smaller groupings; however, there is no cohesive planning that places worship at the centre of the life of the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about whole school worship as a time to "pray to God" and are able to recall some of the things they learned in previous weeks. Many older pupils know the Lord's Prayer and the school prayer. Some opportunities are provided for prayers before lunch and at the end of the day but this is inconsistent. Pupils enjoy singing a range of appropriate Christian songs. Pupils value assemblies to celebrate achievements, however, many do not recognise these occasions or class-based assemblies as worship. A small altar with a cross and lighted candles provides an effective focus for worship in the hall but there is no consistent focus used in class-based worship. On the day of the inspection a lay reader from the local church led worship thoughtfully for a group of younger pupils. Soft music contributed to creating a worshipful atmosphere helping pupils to be quiet and attentive at the beginning. Pupils were able to explain that the lighted candles represent "Jesus the light of the World" and enjoyed looking at an Easter garden, demonstrating what they had learned previously by answering questions about the Easter story. When less actively involved many pupils were easily distracted, however, staff sensitively supported some pupils who found the setting overwhelming. Pupils sang enthusiastically accompanied by clapping and tambourines. Participation of some staff as worshippers provide good role models, however, inconsistencies detract from the sense of a community worshipping together. The vicar plans and leads worship for a section of the school once a week, effectively contributing to children's learning about Anglican faith and practice. The headteacher has encouraged greater use of the local church to celebrate Christian festivals. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm of the recently introduced Easter service and of harvest and Christmas services. Unfortunately the church is only large enough to accommodate the school so attendance by parents on many occasions is limited. At Christmas, however, the church is full for the Year 5 and 6 carol service. Other opportunities for the school and community to worship together include participation in an Advent pageant through the streets organised by an ecumenical group. Parents enthusiastically turn out to watch. The school is just beginning to consider monitoring the quality and impact of collective worship. Some governors have recently completed monitoring forms that have yet to be evaluated. There has been no training provided for leading worship.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school are satisfactory

The headteacher has a clear personal vision for the development of the Christian character of the school. Staff, governors and parents have noticed that under her leadership the relationship between the school and the church has been strengthened. However, not all staff are able to articulate the head's Christian vision. Christian principles are implicit in all aspects of school life and clearly underpin positive relationships in the whole school community. The Christian status of the school is clearly indicated by appropriate signs and symbols introduced by the headteacher in the entrance hall, including a stained glass window which pupils helped to design and make. Throughout the rest of the school, however, there are few indications of the Christian status of the school. Foundation governors provide good personal support and encouragement for the headteacher but as yet their roles in monitoring and evaluating the distinctive Christian character of the school are underdeveloped. Governors, however, have recently reviewed the mission statement and school aims and now recognise they need to monitor and evaluate how these impact on the school. Parents feel valued, well informed and confident to raise issues in the knowledge that their concerns will be addressed sympathetically. As yet, however, their views have not been sought concerning the effectiveness of the Christian character of the school. The School Development Plan has not as yet addressed priorities to develop the school's distinctive Christian character. The new agreed syllabus for religious education is in the process of being integrated into cross-curricular topic planning. There has been little priority given to monitoring and evaluating collective worship or religious education and no staff development opportunities have been offered in these areas. There is a noticeable lack of religious education

displays. The school enjoys regular and committed involvement from the vicar in leading worship and spending time in school. This is effectively contributing to strengthening relationships and provides some opportunities for pastoral and spiritual support for staff. Strong links with an ecumenical church group effectively supports the Christian ethos of the school through running an after school club and holiday clubs. A parent prayer group meets regularly in the school. Recruitment procedures for new staff include appropriate focus on the Christian status of the school.

SIAS report March 2008 Wheatley Church of England Primary School, Wheatley, Oxfordshire,
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