

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Whitchurch Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Salisbury Road

Whitchurch

Shropshire

SY13 1RX

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Shropshire

Dates of inspection: 9th June 2008

Date of last inspection: 4th - 6th July 2005

School's unique reference number: 123514

Headteacher: Mr Matthew Copping

Inspector's name and number Mrs Marianne Phillips: 586

School context

Whitchurch C of E (VC) Junior is a large urban school with 317 pupils on roll. It serves the town of Whitchurch and has very strong links with the Anglican Church. The head has been at the school for one year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whitchurch as a Church of England school are good

The enthusiasm and commitment of the headteacher, rector, foundation governors and other practising Christians fosters opportunities for children's spiritual development. Their support for the development of the school as a distinctive church school is effective.

Established strengths

- Effective school leadership;
- Very strong links with the Church and the shared vision between school and church;
- Pupil contributions and the effective work of the School Council, enabling all pupils to have a voice in the development of this church school;
- The caring Christian ethos and the good relationships that are fostered through its impact;

Focus for development

- Develop the contribution of pupils in collective worship in class and whole school settings, encouraging them to share the beautiful prayers they are keen to write;
- Develop a Christian focus in each classroom linked with opportunity for individual prayer and reflection on a daily basis;
- Encourage further parental involvement in collective worship on a regular basis;
- Develop the formal monitoring and evaluation systems for worship that have been introduced to include children's responses.

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

The large majority of pupils feel valued and special. *"We are important to our school"*, they say. The school's Christian values are impacting on pupils helping them to *"help others when they need a friend"* and *"make the school a better place so we can enjoy being here together"*. The school emphasises in its documentation that *"each person is created in God's image"* and its policies encourage respect and commitment to this, providing many opportunities for pupils to express their views and feelings. All children are encouraged to take responsibilities seriously, especially in their care and support of each other. They say for example, *"We can help school and everyone in it"*. The School Council is an important group within school who feel their work *"helps you become even better than you are"*. They are good representatives of the school population, illustrating the pupils' clear understanding of right and wrong. They canvass the views of their fellow pupils regularly and have contributed to the development of school

policy and the organisation of the new school library. Teachers know their pupils well and create a calm, purposeful working environment, where almost all children feel safe and secure. Behaviour is very good. Conflicts, if they happen are dealt with through the 'start afresh' approach. Children feel 'Playground Friends', the School Council and staff work well together at lunchtime, ensuring all pupils receive the help they need to enjoy their playtime. Parents acknowledge that “ *the school is very welcoming.....they listen and try to respond to us building a rapport*”. The Christian display in the entrance is prominent and the new children's Bible is read frequently. The headteacher, rector and foundation governors have discussed ideas for further developing their school environment to consistently proclaim their distinctiveness. Their ideas are good; with planned opportunities for personal prayer and the support of the religious education and other spiritual aspects of the curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupil attitudes to worship are good, as worship is a central feature of the school day. The reflection by the pupils and their response to prayer is a developing feature. Children say, “*If you believe in God you will want to pray to Him*”. Also “*I pray to respect Jesus for what He has done for us*”. Most children are enthusiastic about the prayers they write. For example, “*I would like to lead prayer in whole school worship.*” Also “*I like to pray at the end of the day I like it when we use our prayers in class worship.*” These are good ideas. The act of worship, witnessed, encouraged a positive response from the pupils, staff and governors as illustrated by the children's comment, “*His spirit is with us*”. Pupils contribute to special services within the church and these are attended by large numbers of parents. All stakeholders speak positively about these experiences. The school plans to develop the opportunities for pupil and class led worship and parental involvement in the future. These plans form part of the action plans the school is considering, to further develop its Christian focus. Most learners know the Lord's prayer and it is said regularly in worship. Music and candles are used to good effect in worship. One child said, “*When the candle is blown out it's like our prayers going up to God.*” Children bow their heads reverently during prayer and reflection and stay focussed and still. The children feel this is “*a thinking time... time for thinking about God*”. The worship is distinctly Christian, supporting its Anglican tradition.

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

The new headteacher has a clear vision and strong commitment to continue to develop Whitchurch as a church school. This is shared enthusiastically by the rector and foundation governors, who lead weekly worship or support services at church. The Christian commitment of this team is evident. The prospectus, aims, website and all documentation, proclaim the school's church status. There are systems of monitoring and evaluation in place that are linked to school improvement planning in relation to the school's church status and collective worship. The further development of these and the Christian character of the school is highlighted in the school development plans. The school has very effective links with the local church and minister. A large majority of parents speak highly of the school and are supportive of its Church distinctiveness. For example, “*The services at church, especially the Leavers' service, are special.....over the 4 years all children will have done something at church*”. And “*How they treat others is an important part of our children's education here*”. The close relationship between the church and school is welcomed. The parents speak positively of the rector's involvement at school and his impact upon the spiritual development of their children. There are productive community links and fund raising for local and world-wide causes. The school is also looking for ways in which the children's understanding of other faiths can be developed in the future. This is clearly stated in its Mission statement. The headteacher, rector and foundation governors have attended training in relation to their role in promoting the school's Christian character. The headteacher feels he has benefited from the support and advice from the diocese. Since the appointment of the headteacher, new initiatives have been introduced that have brought about development in this church school and its church family. This time of change is having a positive impact upon the children and the community.