

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Whittington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Station Road,
Whittington,
Oswestry,
Shropshire
SY11 4DA

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Shropshire

Dates of inspection: 19.6.07

Date of last inspection: 2002

School's unique reference number: 123549

Headteacher: Mr S Sibley

Inspector's name and number: Mrs EM McWhirter MA (244)

School context

Whittington Church of England Aided Primary School enjoys close links with its parish church of St John the Baptist. It is a small rural primary school, serving a large rural parish, with 185 pupils on roll.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Whittington Aided as a Church of England school are outstanding.

This is a place where school and parish work together to ensure that every child really does matter and '*all individuals are equal in the sight of God.*'

Established strengths

- The vision of the Headteacher to enable all members of the school community to be proud of its distinctive Christian character.
- The excellent partnership between the school and parish, especially through its Rector
- The hard working staff and supportive Governors who enable excellence and enjoyment in the curriculum as evidenced especially in Worship and Religious Education.

Focus for development

- Continue to develop the monitoring and assessment of Religious Education so that achievement for all in RE is of the highest quality.

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

Whittington Aided school is '*proud to be a church school*'. It is a place where '*school and church are glued together*' and '*it is okay to talk about God*.' From the moment one steps over the threshold of the school, the Christian ethos is clear for all to see in the prayers and symbols displayed. A lovely example of this is the prayer wall where children write their prayers on clouds, knowing that their prayers will be read and used in Worship. Each class also has a Reflection Diary where children can record ideas and thoughts either about Collective Worship or philosophical questions. One such comment read, '*the vine of grapes meant that we stick together.*' Another on the Anglican ritual of the lighting of the candle for Worship read, '*The candle meant that there will never be darkness.*' The outdoor Reflection Garden, created by the younger children, includes a bench for quiet reflection and prayer. Children and parents regularly attend services at church such as Ash Wednesday, Easter, Ascension Day Eucharist, St John the Baptist Patronal Festival Day, Leavers' Service and Christmas, where one has to arrive early in order to get a seat. Weekly Worship in school is led by the Rector, '*known by everyone*' and of whom one parent said, '*is the best we've had*', or retired Canon resident in the parish. The fortnightly Christian club run by members of the parish community, the Sticky Fingers club, again demonstrates the close link between school

and parish. The school is at the heart of the village, and from one parent's viewpoint, ' *if the church was taken away from the school, the Christian values embraced by the children would drop since this is such a good basis for them to build upon.*' Relationships and behaviour are exemplary in this ' *very friendly, approachable and caring school*' where ' *children look after each other*' and ' *all the teachers care about every single child.*' Indeed, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development is outstanding. Links with a school in Kenya are encouraged which enhances pupils' experiences of the worldwide Anglican communion. Pupils live out the school values based on Christian values. In addition, the school embraces the Every Child Matters agenda through its emphasis on the Christian values of Love, Peace, Trust, Generosity and Service. The School Council enables pupils to learn democratic skills. Pupil achievement in the school curriculum in its widest sense is always praised and rewarded, enabling pupils to be proud of their learning.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship has a high priority in the school, indeed it is at the heart of school life. As one pupil said, ' *Worship makes me feel like God's with me all the time and wherever I go he never leaves me.*' Opportunities to be still, reflect and pray are central to Worship so that pupils value these activities in both their school and their personal lives. One pupil volunteered, ' *I like to care for people and help people, pray for people and make them happy.*' Prayer of course is not confined to Worship and occurs before lunch and at the end of the day. The Lord's Prayer is used regularly, especially when the Rector leads Worship. Pupils write prayers for use in class worship, where each class can acknowledge God and make space for reflection. They contribute through a variety of ways, including drama, to worship within church and school so that they are fully involved. Important events in the church year including patronal festival are celebrated either in school or church, with invitations extended to the village community. Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to attend worship at Lichfield Cathedral as part of the Open Door Project which helps their understanding of Anglican ritual. In addition to the parish clergy, a variety of visitors lead Worship, including the local children's schools worker, and charity workers. This enriches the pupil's perceptions of how believers practice their faith.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education in this school has a high profile. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good, with good use of teacher expertise and resources provided by the parish, and in the use of ICT. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject is in place which informs teaching and planning and achievement of pupils. Its strengthening, through regular assessment in RE to inform teachers' planning will ensure the highest achievement for all pupils. Currently the programme of visits and visitors with reference to other faiths has limited impact on cultural development. Planning an enhanced programme of visits and visitors with reference to other faiths will help promote this. RE continues to be an exciting and enjoyable subject for all, where the children ' *like learning and think learning is really fun.*' Standards meet, and are often above Diocesan expectations throughout the school. The impact of what the pupils have learned in RE is translated into school and everyday life, enriching the whole curriculum. Exciting plans are under way in partnership with the parish church for a discussion group with the Rector and children to emerge, engaging in ultimate questions.

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

The spiritual leadership and vision lived out by the Headteacher in partnership with Governors, clergy, and staff is modelled to parents and children and the wider community. Much has been achieved within the Headteacher's first year at the school. Good news is celebrated through regular communication in 'The Bell' newsletter, 'The Ripple' church magazine, and the school website. A lovely example of this was the school's involvement in the recent visit of the Duke of Gloucester to the village castle and the Queen's swans. One pupil commented, ' *we are not allowed to kill the swans as they are the Queen's.*' There is evidence to show 100% of parents are happy with the school. One parent commented, ' *things are getting better and the school is making more impact on the village than it has ever done.*' With initiatives such as 'Governor of the month', governors involved in evaluation, a new induction process for staff, and active pupil participation through the School Council,

everyone is on board to help move the school forward. Foundation Governors have a very clear understanding of how the school as an Aided church school promotes good practice.

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