

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **The Willows Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

The Willows,  
Stratford-upon-Avon,  
Warwickshire  
CV37 6QN

#### **Diocese: Coventry**

Local authority: Warwickshire

Date of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> July 2007

Date of last inspection: 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2002

School's unique reference number: 125681

Headteacher: Mrs Janis McBride

Inspector's name and number: Geraldine Hansford 407

#### **School context**

The Willows Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary school is located in the heart of Stratford-upon-Avon and is a larger than average school with 270 pupils on roll. The pupils come from varied social and economic backgrounds and a small number of them are in the early stages of learning English. Most classes contain mixed age groups. The headteacher has been in post since January 2006.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Willows Primary School as a Church of England school are good**

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It is a 'listening school' which places the opinions and ideas of pupils at the heart of its self-evaluation process. Christian values are evident in all aspects of school life. The strong links with the cathedral, with local churches of various denominations and with a range of faith-based groups ensure that all members of the school community have the opportunity to develop their appreciation and understanding of the Christian faith.

#### **Established strengths**

- The strong corporate leadership of the headteacher which secures the commitment of all to the Christian status of the school
- A shared Christian vision for the school which is actively promoted and is evident in all school documentation and in displays throughout the school building
- Very strong links with the local and wider Christian community which make a significant contribution to school life
- The involvement of pupils in review and decision making

#### **Focus for development**

- Ensure that governors establish robust procedures for monitoring school effectiveness
- Offer opportunities for non-teaching staff to lead collective worship

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

The school proclaims its Christian status in its prospectus, on its website and through the school motto, "Rooted in faith, we reach for the stars", which was devised by the headteacher and the vicar of the foundation church and which is displayed in every area of the school. The Christian ethos is in evidence throughout the school in symbols and displays, in pupil attitudes and behaviour and in the relationships between all members of the school community, including regular visitors. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils across the school are good because the behaviour policy is based upon Christian values of tolerance, caring and respect and emphasizes that the key to good behaviour is positive relationships. The report of the recent Ofsted inspection identifies the "good care, guidance and support" that the school gives to its pupils and parents express their appreciation for the caring and supportive atmosphere in the school. Performance data shows that pupils of all abilities achieve well in all areas of the curriculum and throughout the school. Their personal and academic achievements are highlighted in a weekly 'Celebration' assembly. Pupils say that they enjoy religious education lessons and they appreciate the relevance of RE to their own lives. Pupils feel valued and appreciate that their views are actively sought through the

school council, through circle time and through class discussions. The proposal for the development of an outdoor area as a spiritual garden will provide the opportunity for pupils to withdraw quietly into a sensitively planned, enclosed area and, in the words of a year 6 pupil, "to consider what is the essence of me". The school shows a strong commitment to charitable giving and the pupils take a particular pride in their fund-raising efforts for those in need in both the local and world-wide community.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Acts of worship make a significant impact on the pupils' personal and spiritual development. Prayer is central to daily worship. Classes pray before lunch and at the end of each day. Pupils learn The Lord's Prayer and write their own prayers which are displayed in classrooms and on the prayer tree. Pupils look forward to sharing times of celebration, prayer and reflection and they appreciate the opportunities to participate. Parents express their appreciation of the impact of worship on their children and one parent, in particular, explained how it had helped and supported her child at a difficult time. The worship co-ordinator works with quiet determination to ensure that worship is very well planned and is of the highest quality. She enables all worship leaders, staff and visitors to contribute to the termly programme of themes and supports them appropriately. Christian festivals are celebrated as are other significant events, such as new entrants to the school and those leaving the school. Local churches provide alternative venues for school worship on special occasions throughout the church and school year. All teaching staff lead worship and the school also benefits from the active involvement of a wide range of visitors including local clergy, the Coventry Diocese RE and Spirituality Officer and a member of Coventry Cathedral's school team. The contribution of representatives from other churches and denominations enables the whole school community to develop an awareness and appreciation of different styles of worship. Pupils enjoy the variety and say that they particularly look forward to the 'Jesus People' team from the foundation church, whose lively and imaginative presentations leave a strong impression on all who attend. The pupils are able to remember the message of previous acts of worship. They make links between the content of worship and religious education lessons and can identify ideas that are similar in Christianity and other faiths, such as care and concern for others. Evaluation is a priority and the co-ordinator consults pupils on a regular basis, using feedback from them to influence changes in worship in response to their views.

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

The headteacher demonstrates a firm commitment to providing a clear Christian focus for the school. This is reinforced in school policies which are being revised to include the statement that they "reflect the Christian Anglican ethos of our school and the values associated with it". The headteacher is directing the school towards improvement through self-evaluation. Priorities for the future development of the school as a church school are identified and included in the school improvement and development plan. The headteacher's inclusive style enables all members of the school community to contribute to growth and progress in all areas of the school. She has encouraged a colleague to take on the role of religious education and worship co-ordinator which has flourished under new direction. RE is well planned and effectively monitored and evaluated and an assessment process is in place. There is little religious diversity in the school and it is, therefore, seen as a priority to develop links with a school where there is a predominance of another faith. Parents play an active role in the life of the school. They are consulted on a regular basis and their views are taken into account. A number of parents are also school governors. The governors support the school through a programme of visits and through discussion with the headteacher and staff. Meetings of the governing body review the church dimension of the school but are not yet fully involved in rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Through its newsletters the school keeps the local community informed about events both at school and in church. In turn, school news is communicated to the church family through the parish magazine and pew leaflets.

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