

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Winchcombe Abbey Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Back Lane,
Winchcombe,
Cheltenham
GL54 5PZ

Diocese of Gloucester

Gloucestershire LA

Date of inspection: 28th January 2008

Date of last inspection: 2003

School's URN: 132782

Name of Headteacher: Mr Andrew Meller

Inspector: Brian Torode, NS 111

Context

Winchcombe Abbey School is an average sized primary school which draws from a wide social and economic catchment area. There are very few children from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment on entry is below national average. The school achieved the IIP Award in 2005 and the Healthy Schools Award in 2006.

The present Headteacher took up his appointment at the beginning of the Autumn Term 2007.

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

The ethos of the school is such that there is little doubt as to its caring, Christian foundation. The strong links with the Church are valued by the majority of the parents and the staff. The children enjoy school and benefit from the attractive, motivating and safe environment in which they learn. Relationships between staff and children are very good and contribute towards making the school a secure and happy place in which to develop.

Established strengths

- The welcoming and inclusive atmosphere which greets newcomers to the school
- The personal concern for the children's well being and development, shared by all
- The stimulating environment in which to work
- The strong links with the church and its community
- The positive role model provided by all the Staff and Governors

Focus for development

- To develop a clearer Anglican identity in order to reflect the school's C of E status.
- To monitor consistency in the use of the end of day prayer opportunity.
- To develop more consistent practice in the marking and assessment of RE.
- To promote opportunities for more frequent presence and participation of parents at school worship.

The school is outstanding in meeting the needs of all its learners through its distinctive Christian character.

The distinctive Christian character of the school is evident in displays in classrooms and shared areas. Children were able to talk informatively about materials and issues in the displays. The care taken in celebrating a wide range of children's work from all abilities shows the value that the school places on all learners and sets a very good model for peer appreciation. Samples of prayers composed by the children, seen around the school, encourage spiritual development and reflection.

Relationships between adults and children are warm and sympathetic and children feel secure in the knowledge that adults care about their well being. This has a positive impact upon the children's responses and behaviour. The emphasis placed on spiritual, moral, social and personal values is evident in the children's attitude towards others in the school community and most are confident in expressing their feelings and opinions. Achievement is celebrated and a range of activities provide extra curricular experiences which help to develop interests and widen or cement relationships. Parents are very enthusiastic about the links being forged with the church and feel that these contribute towards the general behaviour and attitudes of the children. The ease with which the headteacher and staff can be approached is something commented upon by all parents spoken to.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Worship is recognised by all as an essential part of the school day. Parents spoken to were of the firm opinion that 'school would not be the same without it.' Collective Worship meets the statutory requirements. The children participate in worship with reverence and respect. Reflection time contributes to the children's spiritual development and one child described this as being 'time to think a sort of prayer about someone in your head' The children are involved in worship preparation, know the Lord's Prayer and participate well in singing. There is a need for the introduction of some distinctively Anglican patterns of responses and prayers to reflect the school's Anglican foundation. A more prominent cross or icon displayed on the wall in the worship area would also provide an obvious focal point for reflection. The worship seen was lively, enthusiastically shared and the Christian value was illustrated and reinforced with both secular and Biblical narratives. The Christian values have an obvious impact on the way the children treat one another and the value being presented each month is followed up in other areas of the curriculum and in circle time.

The church is regularly used for worship and as a teaching resource. Prayers are said at other times during the day in some classes but this needs to become a whole school pattern. A system of worship evaluation by the children has yet to be introduced and a distinction needs to be made in written and spoken references, between assembly and worship.

The effect of Religious education is satisfactory

The teaching of RE follows the Gloucestershire Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education and includes learning about all faiths other. There is little local opportunity to experience to meet people from other faiths at first hand and visit their places of worship. A simple assessment recording system is in place but this needs to be developed to include levels of attainment and targets. Marking is not consistent throughout the school and does not always match that seen in other curriculum areas. A portfolio of moderated work would raise the profile of this area of school curriculum. RE is taught enthusiastically and children are involved actively in the lessons. All staff feel comfortable with teaching the subject and some lessons are observed by Foundation Governors. Attainment in RE is reported to parents in a similar way to other subjects on the curriculum. Use is made of the church as an educational resource. Good practice in the use of ICT is shared among staff. Most children said they enjoyed RE and liked learning about what other people believe.

Spiritual development is encouraged through reflective time within the lesson, for example when considering the nature of God and relating it to the children's own experiences. Addressing global issues forms a significant part of the children's development and some children were able to enter discussion about flooding and drought and how we need to respond to such events.

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

The headteacher enthusiastically articulates the Christian vision for the school and is supported by the Foundation Governors who promote its Christian character. Parents welcome the lead given by the headteacher and some offer practical support in various ways including running a 'Christian Club' as an extra curricular activity. The school publicity documentation speaks emphatically about its Christian ethos and the headteacher's commitment encourages a positive attitude on the part of staff and children. The atmosphere, friendliness and appearance of the school reflect the sound Christian values that underpin the work that takes place. Pastoral matters are addressed at staff meetings as appropriate. Outside areas provide attractive and stimulating places to promote spiritual development opportunities and to develop relationships in a secure environment, with quiet areas and appropriate playground equipment. The links with the Church are particularly strong and the local clergy of several denominations are familiar visitors to the school. Worship takes place fortnightly in the Anglican church and this is valued as an important contribution to the children's spiritual development. Parents support this opportunity and see it as a way of encouraging co-operation and respect for other places of worship, practices and beliefs.

Foundation Governors make visits to school on a regular basis and report to the Governing Body on matters pertaining to the development of the school's Christian Foundation. Governors' meetings start with prayer. A Foundation Governor recently worked with the headteacher on the school's SEF. The staff value and welcome the interest shown by the Governors but their more positive leadership role is an area which needs to be encouraged and developed. Opportunities for joint staff / Governor CPD would provide a valuable way forward.

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