

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street  
Woodham Walter  
Maldon  
Essex  
CM9 6RF

#### Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex  
Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009  
Date of last inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2006  
School's unique reference number: 115123  
Headteacher: Mrs Madeleine Matthews  
Inspector's name and number: Mr John Baker (11)

#### School context

This all-age primary school is a popular church school. It currently has 79 pupils on roll and serves the rural community of Woodham Walter and surrounding towns. The school has four classes made up of a Foundation Stage class with nineteen pupils; a mixed year 1 and 2 class; a mixed year 3 and 4 class and a mixed year 5 and 6 class. Classes, therefore, are smaller than average. The parish church of St. Michael the Archangel lies about a quarter of a mile away near the centre of the village and the school's links with the church are close and friendly.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The headteacher strongly promotes the distinctive Christian ethos of Woodham Walter Primary School and the school, as a consequence, very effectively meets the needs of all its pupils.

#### Established strengths

- The school's distinctive Christian character is outstanding, pupils feel valued and special and their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is promoted at a very high level.
- The school's partnership links with the parish church of St. Michael the Archangel are strong and these links provide very effective support for the Christian work of the school.
- School assemblies have improved since the previous inspection and are now good, and pupils' knowledge and understanding of the major Christian festivals and special days from the Anglican Church year have improved significantly.
- The headteacher, supported very ably by her staff team, provides strong Christian leadership for the school, and parents, foundation and other governors value highly the work of the school as a church school.

#### Focus for development

- To ensure the Church of England self-evaluation framework is used systematically by school leaders and governors and is an integral part of the school's ongoing improvement and self-evaluation process as an Anglican church school.
- To embed the newly introduced 'values' framework for assemblies, ensuring there is consistency across class-based, key stage and whole school acts of collective worship.
- To extend the school's links with other Christian denominations and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop a sensitive awareness of the beliefs of other faiths.

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

Every child at Woodham Walter Primary School is valued and relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. The school places the highest priority on meeting pupils' personal needs and in ensuring all pupils fulfil their maximum potential in academic, social, physical and spiritual areas of life. The school's values are founded on Christian principles such as

honesty, kindness, love and forgiveness and these values permeate the work of the school. As a consequence, pupils, including those with special educational and additional needs, love coming to school and work hard; they feel safe and happy and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted at a very high level. Parents speak in glowing terms of the caring nature of the school and many of their children come from outside the normal admissions area out of choice. The outdoor quiet area, new circular bench, placed in memory of a former member of staff, and the 'Forest School' (a special wooded area adjacent to the school) provide very high quality and appropriate opportunities for pupils to be quiet and to reflect. Pupils are able to talk openly to their teacher and support staff about their feelings and beliefs in these special places. Pupils are also able to express their own feelings and beliefs during RE (religious education) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, and pupils can be very articulate at these times. As one pupil said during Circle Time, which summed up the views of the whole class: 'Our school is very beautiful'.

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

Staff and pupils play an active role in whole school assemblies and prayer and times of reflection regularly take place. Older pupils know The Lord's Prayer and many pupils can recite the beautiful School Creed, which opens with the words: 'This is our school, let peace dwell here, let the room be full of contentment...' and concludes with: 'Let us remember that, as many hands build a house, so many hearts make a school.' Times of reflection such as these strongly promote pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies, where candles and Christian artefacts are frequently used, are whole school, key stage and class-based and the Priest-in-Charge, his wife and others from the Parochial Church Council visit the school fortnightly to conduct acts of collective worship. Special days from the Anglican Church year often provide a lively focus for these occasions, supporting the school's Anglican tradition. Special services, such as Christmas, Easter, the leavers' service and Harvest Festival are held in the parish church, when parents and friends from the village are included. These services reinforce effectively the school's community links, as do the weekly 'celebration' assemblies to which parents are invited. The school's values, recently introduced into assembly time, still need to be more coherently planned in order to ensure consistency of practice across the school.

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

The headteacher, staff and foundation governors promote the school's Christian character and ethos very effectively. These are made explicit in the school prospectus and in its close links with the parish church, where a governor has specific responsibilities in this regard, and implicitly through the relationships the school has with its parents and the wider community. Moreover, the incumbent and his wife run a weekly 'Jesus and Me (JAM)' club, reinforcing the school's Christian vision. Foundation and other governors are aware of their responsibilities in providing challenge as well as support to the headteacher. Closer involvement by governors in monitoring and reviewing the work of school as a church school would be beneficial and enhance its overall provision. The Diocesan Kenya Schools Partnership Project, which the school is actively involved in, very significantly enhances and extends the school's Anglican links globally. A member of the teaching staff and a foundation governor have visited Africa and established close and reciprocal links with Mutira Primary School in Kenya. This link provides an outstanding example of the Christian vision of the school as an Anglican church school in action. Links with other Christian denominations and provision for pupils to gain a greater awareness of other faiths are aspects of the school's work in need of developing.