

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Woolhampton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Woolhampton,
Reading,
RG7 5TB

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: West Berkshire

Date of inspection: 28th March 2008

Date of last inspection: 3rd February 2003

School's Unique reference number: 110025

Name of Headteacher: Mr Andrew Bingham

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Pauline Stanton-Saringer

Context

Woolhampton is a small primary school in a fairly isolated situation, but close to the church. The pupils are predominantly white British and come from a mixture of social backgrounds. The headteacher is in his third year at the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Woolhampton Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Woolhampton has made positive progress in establishing its distinctiveness as a church school. The vision and work of the headteacher, supported by staff and governors, has resulted in a positive ethos in the school based on Christian values. This has promoted the sense of community and improved behaviour.

Established strengths

- The vision and enthusiasm of the Headteacher, staff and vicar for promoting the church school ethos.
- The supportive sense of community in which all school members are valued

Focus for development

- Actively involve the foundation governors in monitoring and evaluating the collective worship and religious education.
- Enable pupils to play a more active part in the collective worship

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

The Headteacher is working hard to ensure that Christian values are at the centre of school life. He and his staff set a very positive example in the way they treat pupils as individuals. As a result there is a good sense of community where everyone feels valued. Pupils speak of feeling "happy" and "safe" in school. Junior pupils enjoy the responsibility of helping in infant classes. Themes from collective worship have been followed up in class and one effect has been to reduce the incidence of bullying to a very low level. The recently introduced "buddy scheme" is welcomed by the children and helps them to settle quickly into school and feel confident. The school listens to its pupils and their parents. In response to requests, a good range of lunch time and after-school activities have been introduced. These are well attended and have resulted in better behaviour during lunch hour.

The school makes good provision for slower learners and as a result they make good progress. While always seeking to raise academic standards, the school ensures that all kinds of achievement are celebrated through "achievement awards". These contribute to the pupils' sense of being valued as individuals.

The vicar plays a major part in widening the spiritual understanding of the pupils. They enjoy his input into school life and interact well with him.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Collective worship is not yet seen, by pupils, as a central part of school life. However, the Head teacher and the vicar have done a lot of good work and planning which is raising the profile and content of worship. The pupils are attentive and responsive, but they do not often play an active part in the worship – for example by reading prayers. Pupils were able to speak with understanding about the Holy Week and Easter worship which had recently been led by the vicar. Some have an awareness of the purpose of the opportunities for quiet reflection. The planning of collective worship, the valued involvement of the vicar and the use of the church for special celebrations ensure that pupils are aware of the Anglican tradition. However, there is little specific monitoring or feedback which could be used to improve the impact of worship.

The collective worship policy is due to be reviewed and – at present - indicates some confusion between assembly and collective worship. However, in daily practice the distinction is quite clear.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school follows the West Berkshire agreed syllabus. The subject leader is enthusiastic and thorough in her planning. She also teaches religious education in 3 of the 4 classes. This gives greater continuity, enabling the subject to be delivered more effectively and improving differentiation. Pupils were seen to be participating well in lessons and to be enjoying them. They were able to apply the subject to their own experience. Where possible, there are some links between the religious education and collective worship and the youngest children clearly understood the story of Easter which was included in both and were able to associate this with the idea of being sad and then happy.

The teaching of religious education is good because the lessons are well planned and the experienced staff have a good rapport with the pupils. This encourages them to work well in the lessons. Assessment of the subject is in place, but is being reviewed as part of the on-going subject development. A recent pilot assessment in Year2/3 indicated that standards in religious education were comparable with those in literacy which were in line with the national average. Religious education is given its full place in the curriculum and, while the Christian content is given its full value, all the other faith options are included. This has increased understanding of and respect for other faith traditions. Even the youngest pupils responded to a request to handle a statue of a Hindu god with respect.

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

The Headteacher has a clear vision for developing the school's Christian ethos. This is a priority on the school's development plan and is gradually being implemented. The vicar gives strong support and his regular presence in school is helping to raise the Christian profile. The governors speak warmly of the improved sense of what it means to be a church school. The governors' own awareness has been raised by training from the diocesan advisor. The foundation governors are beginning to grasp the true nature of their specific responsibilities in a church school. However, they are not yet exercising their monitoring role in collective worship and religious education and so cannot offer specific support in these areas. The use of the church building is also helping to develop the church school ethos. Parents express confidence in the school and are very positive about the care their children receive. There is a gradual growth in parent participation in special worship celebrations in church and in the achievement celebrations.

The planning which is in place and the work which is already being put into practice are such that Woolhampton is well placed to become increasingly effective as a church school.