

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Northbourne Church of England (VA) Primary School

Didcot,
Oxfordshire.
Ox11 8LJ

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 29th March 2012

Date of last inspection: 17th November 2008

School's unique reference number: 123221

Headteacher: Mr Paul Shaughnessy

Inspector's name and number: The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

School context

This is an average sized church school of 270 pupils. Children come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of pupils are White British.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Northbourne CE (VA) Primary as a Church of England school are good

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of this good church school stem from the dedicated Christian leadership of senior leaders and their commitment to ensuring that the Christian community of the school is a gift both to its pupils and surrounding area.

Established strengths

- The inclusive and secure Christian environment where pupils become confident individuals and flourish spiritually, academically and culturally.
- The caring and considerate nature of the pupils that arises from the school's outstanding provision in collective worship and Religious Education (RE) and its highly effective work in developing pupils socially.
- The effective Christian leadership of the headteacher and the RE subject leader.
- The strong links between the church and school and their Christian impact upon community cohesion.

Focus for development

- Ensure that governors use National Society grade descriptors to make evaluations concerning the impact of provision, recording their deliberations fully in the minutes of each termly governing body meeting.
- With diocesan support, develop a detailed guidance document for staff, governors and parents that maps out exactly where and how the school's Christian values are actively developed across the curriculum and through the wider work of the school and for governors to monitor the effectiveness of this provision on an annual basis.

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

The mission statement of nurturing excellence and the practice in school secures the school's commitment to meeting individual needs within a stimulating and caring environment founded on Christian values and teaching. Leaders are sure, and outcomes demonstrate, that Christian values are effectively promoted. However, it is not always clear exactly when and how these are developed which limits the potential of the school to extend the impact of its Christian values. Behaviour in school is excellent supported by positive and effective behaviour management systems. Relationships throughout the school are strong and pupils generally show care and concern for each other. As a consequence pupils are proud of their school and say that the teachers are kind and listen to any problems they might have. By their participation in a variety of charitable and community events such as fundraising for the British Legion, pupils have a growing understanding of the lives and needs of others. RE and collective worship hold a high status in the life of the school. Consequently, they make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual awareness and development. The attractive school environment and the school's commitment to the arts also support

spiritual growth. However, Christian symbolism is limited in the built and natural environments which mean that the school misses opportunities to extend its Christian and Anglican ethos.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The atmosphere created in school is that of a large family worshipping together confirming for pupils the whole community aspects of the activity. Pupils have opportunity to be actively engaged in leading and shaping collective worship. Pupils are regularly asked for their views as to how they view worship and what they think would improve the experience and they thus feel a sense of ownership. As the worship is focussed upon the needs of pupils they are always engaged in worship and affirmed by it. As a result pupils speak readily and positively about the experience and its impact upon themselves. The school benefits from the legacy of the immediate past incumbent, Canon Edward Carter, in particular through the pioneering work he and the school undertook in the God's Storyteller approach to collective worship. The methodology engages pupils and has a highly positive impact on them. Pupils readily speak of the stories and relate them to Christian values and their own behaviours. Parents also comment on the effectiveness of the approach and enjoy being involved in the termly concluding story themselves. Some staff feel that the approach nourishes them spiritually too. Regular contributions to collective worship by dedicated church members and visits to the parish church by pupils add to children's understanding of the Anglican nature of their school, as does a clear following of the church's year for example in celebrating festivals and saints' days. Collective worship is well led by the headteacher who ensures that outcomes are outstanding.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is frequently part of cross curricular themes which extends the impact of RE and enables pupils to see RE as integral to life and learning. An example of this is the recent *Bodies* topic that explored the spiritual and religious significance of food in a range of faith traditions. The impact of RE is most effective because learning styles are often active and creative for example in drama. They are effective because pupils state they enjoy creative approaches the most. Through these ways of learning, pupils develop empathy and understanding by entering imaginatively into contexts and stories being explored. Children's knowledge of Christianity and their understanding of the Christian way of life are usually well developed. This is because the curriculum challenges pupils effectively for example by exploring such complex mysteries as The Trinity, resurrection and creation. The school makes good use of visitors such as the local Baptist minister and visits, for example to Oxford Synagogue. This extends pupils' knowledge of how people celebrate in different denominations and faiths and how their faith impacts on daily life and customs. The subject is extremely well led by the dedicated subject leader resulting in high standards. The subject leader regularly reviews the planning and evaluates pupils' progress and attainment. She ensures that planning and learning are built upon assessment which teachers are increasingly using to good effect. Pupil progress is at least good and for many children is outstanding. This reflects the rising standards in all core subjects. The recording of pupils' conversations is an important strength that captures children's oral work and contributes to a fuller understanding of standards and learning in RE by the teachers and school leaders. As a result of quality RE, pupils at Northbourne feel confident and open in discussing issues of faith and the 'big questions' of life. They do so in a supportive and respectful way.

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

The headteacher and governors have a commitment to this school as an Anglican school and as a result Christian values are promoted. Governors are involved in self evaluation through regular involvement in the life of school. However, a consideration of the church school aspect against National Society grade descriptors is not as rigorous as it should be limiting the governors' potential to challenge the school to improve. The school has, however, responded well to the area for development of the last inspection. This is because the Christian leadership of the headteacher and RE subject leader is effective. The school leaders are able to draw in all stakeholders to consider the effectiveness of the school and to determine future developments as a church school. The parents are clear that they are appropriately consulted and that as a result they feel the school responds well to their views and concerns. Parents and the local community are very supportive of the school. The school undertakes well considered staff professional development as a result of self evaluation. This then has a positive impact on improved provision for pupils and succession planning. The school has a key strength in community cohesion resulting from its clear commitment to a global curriculum and local community cohesion together with its good links with St Peter's Church. The school also has a most positive link with a Leicester City school in a multi-cultural context which aids pupils' understanding of the diversity of cultures and religions in Britain. The school has productive links with the diocese drawing professional support from the diocesan education advisors. The school is also involved in diocesan events such as the Oxford Gospels Project. These links help to secure the school's understanding of itself as a successful contributor to the mission of the Diocese of Oxford.

