



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Leckhampton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Hall Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham GL53 0HP

Diocese of Gloucester

LA: Gloucestershire
Date of inspection: Friday, April 25th 2008
Date of last inspection: November 2003
School's URN: 115667
Name of Headteacher: Mr Peter Gardner
Inspector: Mr Andrew Rickett, NS 201

School Context

Leckhampton is a larger than average primary school serving a mainly urban area. The socio economic background of the children is generally favourable. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of children are from a white British heritage.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Leckhampton CE VC as a church school are outstanding

The school's distinctiveness lies in its approach to the spiritual development of the children and the understanding of the effect this has on the personal development of the children and the contribution it makes to their learning.

Established strengths

- There is a very high emphasis on spiritual development.
- The impact of collective worship makes a difference to the lives of the children.
- Foundation governors have a clear understanding of how the Christian character of the school has an impact on the children.

Focus for development

- Review the policy for spiritual development so that it reflects the progress made in this area.
- Identify more clearly the impact of collective worship on the lives of the children
- Involve governors in the evaluation of collective worship.

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

The school's special quality is the way that it is evolving its own interpretation of spiritual growth and recognising how it can make a significant contribution to the lives of the children. Such opportunities for personal development happen not only through experiences and appreciation of the wonders all around, but also through learning from each other. There is an understanding that children and adults draw inspiration from these relationships through empathy and the acceptance that everyone is special. This has created an environment in which children can be themselves and feel valued for what they are. Children feel very much that they can trust each other and openly express their beliefs and opinions. Many examples were seen throughout the school of this very high quality of relationships where children and adults treat each other with care and respect. This also has a large bearing on the very good quality of their learning. For example, in an excellent RE lesson young children were encouraged to reflect on the wonder of God's creation as they watched a DVD showing the immensity of the universe. These children were able to explain that however insignificant we might be, each one of us is special to God. The school does recognize however that its policy for spiritual development needs to be reviewed so that it reflects the progress that has been made since the last inspection. Children's attitudes towards learning are very good because the activities presented to them are stimulating and creative. This motivates them to do their best and as a result they enjoy their learning. Pupils achieve well and those with special educational difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the strong support and encouragement they receive. The school has very good and long established links with communities in other countries and this helps to give children a good awareness of other cultures. The school council is an effective voice in the school and children are proud of their involvement in improving the quality of the environment around them.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school has used the 'Values for Life' scheme to deliver acts of worship for two years and it has made a substantial difference to the quality of worship. There is a clear framework to acts of worship and a greater continuity between the themes and work covered in PSHE helps to reinforce each 'value' by making them more relevant to the lives of the children. This is having a good impact on the children. They remember the different values covered and say that they can recall messages heard and use what they have learned to help in real life situations both in and out of school. The views of children do need to be gathered however, so that the school has a greater understanding of what the impact of worship is on the children's lives. The pattern of worship through the week provides good opportunities for children to experience a range of styles and a variety of ways through which they can engage with the message. For example, class based worship is adapted to meet the needs of different age groups when the theme can be developed to a greater depth. Each week a class leads the act of worship and these can be times when the children's interpretation of the theme, though drama or other creative ways, has more meaning for the rest of the school. Worship is distinctly Christian. Children understand that the lighting of a candle marks the beginning of a special time, different from assembly, and that it signifies Jesus as the Light of the World. Bible readings are used to illustrate the message and prayers reflect the theme. Children have a good understanding of why they pray and respond with confidence and respect when they say the Lord's Prayer. The Collective Worship Coordinator has made a number of changes to worship that have helped to create positive attitudes among the children.

The introduction of new songs of praise, for example, is a popular innovation and children sing with an exuberance and enthusiasm which helps to create a feeling of celebration. A number of visiting clergy, including the vicar and curate, make an important contribution to the worship experience and children say that they enjoy the different approaches. Despite the practicalities of getting to the parish church, the school values the opportunities to mark special festivals at the church. The recent collaboration between school and church on the Experience Easter initiative, in which a series of interactive stations help children to engage with the Easter story, is seen as a great success in which both school and parish benefited.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school are outstanding

The headteacher is committed to looking at ways in which the impact of the school's Christian character can constantly be enhanced. He has reflected carefully on what church school distinction really means and can clearly articulate a vision that encompasses the development of the whole child with a particular emphasis on spiritual growth founded on Christian principles. This vision is shared by the whole school community and is evident in the appreciation shown by parents that the school provides opportunities for their children to explore and acquire a sense that there is something 'other' in life. The support that governors give to promoting the school's Christian character is excellent. Foundation governors are very clear about how Christian values make a significant contribution towards the children's personal development. They also have a very good understanding of the relationship between the nurturing of children's wellbeing and the impact this has on the quality of learning. The chair of governors is particularly active in ensuring that the school's ethos is constantly under review and through her membership of the PCC, plays a key role in maintaining the school's high profile within the church community. Links with the parish church have developed significantly since the last inspection and are very good. The vicar and his curate play an increasingly important part in school particularly with the regard to their pastoral role for the whole school community. The curate has developed a relationship with the children through her regular visits both to lead acts of worship and to help in the classroom. An established prayer network means that the school is regularly prayed for by members of the local community. The RE and Worship Coordinator is passionate about the importance of spiritual growth and the difference it makes to the lives of the children. She ensures that RE is a valued part of the curriculum and has improved the quality of collective worship by making it more accessible to the children. The school is an important part of the local community and is highly regarded by parents for the balance between academic rigour and the development of the whole child. They agree that teachers are extremely caring for the children and do their utmost to support them.