

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Haddenham St Mary's Church of England (VC) School

Haddenham,
Buckinghamshire.
HP17 8AF

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Dates of inspection: 12th December 2012

Date of last inspection: 22nd February 2007

School's unique reference number:8253073

Headteacher: Mrs Karen Collett

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

School context

This is a small rural church school of 89 infant pupils. Virtually all the children come from favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Most pupils are White British. The headteacher has been in post for four terms.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Haddenham St Mary's as a Church of England school are outstanding

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of this outstanding church school stem from the dedicated Christian leadership of the headteacher and governors. They are committed to ensuring that the Christian community of the school is a gift both to its pupils and the surrounding area. The school benefits richly from an effective local churches-together association with four Christian denominations actively supporting its work.

Established strengths

- The highly effective Christian leadership of the headteacher and competent governing body in ensuring Christian values consciously permeate the work of the school.
- The quality relationships at all levels of the school where cooperation, trust and care are clearly evident.
- The inclusive and secure Christian environment where pupils flourish spiritually, academically and culturally.
- The strong links between the local churches and school and their Christian impact upon local community cohesion.

Focus for development

- Ensure that all governors and staff are well trained to use National Society grade descriptors to make rigorous evaluations and to make them central to a coherent whole school approach to self evaluation.
- With diocesan support, develop a range of creative strategies and opportunities to engage pupils in constructing, leading and evaluating collective worship on a frequent basis.

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

The Christian values of honesty, compassion, respect, perseverance, community and hope are clearly stated and thus inform the work of the school in a positive and coherent way. Behaviour in school is generally excellent supported by positive and effective behaviour management systems that are underpinned by the school's core values. As a result, children can relate their behaviour choices to Christian values in particular of respect and honesty. Relationships throughout the school are strong and pupils generally show care and compassion for each other. As a consequence pupils are proud of their school and say that the teachers are kind and listen to any concerns they might have. The values of compassion and community are extended by children's participation in a variety of charitable and community events such as fundraising for the Romanian shoe box appeal and the Aylesbury Salvation Army harvest food bank appeal. Pupils have a growing understanding of the lives and needs of others as a result. The school's strong eco work also develops pupils' responsibility for the environment and its inhabitants locally and on a larger scale. The school environment is pleasant and enhances the spiritual growth of the children. Religious Education (RE) makes a good contribution to the church school aspect. RE is enhanced by focus days and weeks for example on Chinese New Year and the Jewish festival of Hanukkah which develops pupils' religious understanding and vocabulary. RE and

collective worship hold high status in the life of the school. Consequently, they make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual awareness and development. Pupils' academic attainment is high at this school and progress is at least good for most pupils. High standards arise in part from the school's focus on perseverance and developing confidence.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

As the collective worship is focussed upon the needs of the children, they are usually engaged. Children of all faiths and none are affirmed by it. As a result pupils speak readily and positively about the experience and its impact upon themselves. This is particularly marked when collective worship is related to the Christian values of the school or includes Bible stories that appeal such as Simeon and Anna recognizing the divinity of the Christ child. Pupils have opportunity to be actively engaged in shaping aspects of collective worship. However this is not as regularly or extensive as it should be. The school does not fully utilize the considerable gifts these children have to devise and lead collective worship or to be creative in approach. Pupils are regularly asked for their views as to how they view worship for example in spider diagram evaluations and they thus feel a sense of ownership. Regular contributions to collective worship by dedicated members of the local churches-together association gives pupils a broad understanding of the nature of Christianity and differing forms of worship. The positive involvement of the local vicar in collective worship and visits to the parish church by pupils add to children's understanding of the Anglican nature of their school This is enhanced further by a clear following of the church's year for example in celebrating festivals such as harvest and Easter. Children's understanding of multicultural, world wide Christianity is limited. Collective worship is well led by the headteacher who ensures that outcomes are consistently good. Planning for collective worship is appropriate and sometimes creative. Planning involves the churches-together members which brings coherence to the themes. It also takes account of their ongoing evaluations helping shape the worship to the needs of the children. Governors make only limited use of the National Society grade descriptors to inform evaluations inhibiting their ability to challenge the school to improve further. An example of this is that the school still uses the non-religious 'assembly' as the term for collective worship. Reflection is used well in collective worship and at other times too enabling children to be still and to consider what they have heard and feel. Prayer is important in the life of the school. The prayer strings in the classrooms are filled with pupil initiated prayers which are used both in the classroom and in acts of collective worship making prayers meaningful and significant for the children.

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

The Christian leadership of the headteacher is exemplary resulting in a demonstrable change in emphasis in the school from one that justifies its Christian foundation to a position where the school confidently proclaims its core Christian values. She has built upon the school's previous strengths bringing a new energy, creativity and drive to ensuring Christian values are fundamental to the all round development and care of the children. This has resulted in all groups of stakeholders sharing in this vision and being able to articulate the values of the school. The Christian values steering group is a commendable outcome of this. Parents readily describe the positive impact of the school's Christian values upon their children and the compassionate ethos of the school. A further example of this is the commendable care of a school family recently bereaved. The headteacher is well supported by a capable governing body who understand the school's developmental needs as a church school resulting for example in the well judged appointment of the headteacher. The school has made appropriate progress towards the development points of the last inspection. The school draws all stakeholders into a range of self-evaluation activities which makes them feel part of the school community. Governors evaluate the work of the school regularly. However, their limited use of National Society grade descriptors means their ability to challenge the school to improve still further is inhibited. Their understanding of evaluating the church school aspect separately to whole school evaluation hinders their intention to ensure that the church school aspect is absolutely central to the work of the school. The school is most effective in planning for succession and gives professional development a high profile accordingly. This results in a committed, well trained staff that secures the values and standards of this church school and who are well placed to lead other church schools in the future. New governors are carefully inducted supporting their capacity to lead this church school. It is clear that the support staff have a hugely positive impact upon the school bringing continuity to its Christian foundation. The relationships between the school, the churches-together churches and the local community are a real strength of this school. Consequently there is strong local support of this school. The positive relationships enable the school to effectively promote its value of community and to be a Christian presence in local community cohesion. The school is committed to being an inclusive community. Accordingly it actively builds links with families and communities of other faith traditions such as Judaism and greatly values their contribution to the life of the school. Parents and the community rightly hold this school in high regard. One parent said, "They clearly love our children. I know at this school they will be loved as I would love them for the whole day."