



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Ashleworth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Green
Ashleworth
Gloucester
GL19 4HT

Diocese of Gloucester:

Gloucestershire LA:

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| Date of inspection: | 30th March 2011 |
| Date of last inspection: | 24 th September 2008 |
| School's URN: | 115663 |
| Name of Headteacher: | Mr Gary Law |
| Inspector: | Mrs Daphne Spitzer NS 37 |

Context

Ashleworth School is a very small school with 22 children on roll. It serves the village of Ashleworth as well as a site for Travellers nearby. All the children are of white British heritage. The numbers of children with learning difficulties/ physical disabilities are in line with the national average. The original Victorian building has been extended and well maintained. The headteacher has been in post for just over one year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashleworth Church of England School as a church school are good.

The distinctive Christian character of Ashleworth is reflected in its warm, inclusive Christian ethos and the way that the lives of the school, church and village are so closely intertwined. This has had an impact on the personal and spiritual development of the children.

Established strengths

- Excellent relationships between the children built on Christian values
- Pivotal role of the licensed lay reader both in developing collective worship, in partnership with the headteacher and in the daily life of the school
- Outstanding interwoven links between the school, parents, church and village community

Focus for development

- Develop greater ownership of collective worship by the children by enabling them to be more active participants and providing regular opportunities for them to evaluate its impact on their lives
- Develop a core set of Christian values owned by all stakeholders in order to further embed the school's Christian ethos
- Enable and equip the governors to take a greater role in evaluating the school as a church school

The school's distinctive Christian character is good in meeting the needs of all learners

Ashleworth is a welcoming, friendly church school family. Its positive Christian ethos ensures that all children feel valued and special, enjoy school and are given many opportunities to achieve their potential. There is a very clear focus on the individual child's needs and interests which is reflected in the new themed curriculum to which all children contribute. Christian values are reflected in the way in the inclusive culture where all children interact well with each other. Spiritual development is given a high priority at Ashleworth. A reflection garden has recently been designed by the children and a prayer buried in the ground. This has had an impact on the children who talked about God receiving their message and how they felt the garden's quiet calm atmosphere helped them feel closer to Him. A special "Reflection Day" was held recently when many beautiful batik prayer flags were made and displayed in school to promote spiritual awareness. One boy commented that the cross on his school badge reminds him that "Jesus never dies." Another child said it was important "not to worry about making mistakes". There are opportunities to pray during the school day as well as to take time for reflection during lessons. For instance, in one religious education lesson observed, children were considering the Christian values which challenge and sustain the work of Christian Aid, whilst in another lesson, younger children were reflecting on Noah's qualities as a special friend to God. The school's special "parliament" with several "ministers" provides children with responsibilities based on real life issues, such as improving the local environment by building a nature trail in the village. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Children are proud of their school and their contributions to school life. An example of this is their "High Five" school rules, though it was noted that these were not explicitly linked to Christian values. Relations are caring and harmonious because children know that if they fall over or need help or encouragement in class another child will always be there. Children who show Christian values are nominated by other children for a place on the "Magic Moments" board and are praised during celebration assemblies. Good teamwork is another feature of daily life, between children, staff and parents. The school environment is very well used to promote spiritual development. For instance, the sense of school community is reflected in the Belonging Tree and the large cross display of individual crosses woven by each child, based on Bible stories. A pebble pool is well used by children in the key stage two classroom to promote reflection. Children are also very proud of the stained glass door in the library which they painted.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an important part of the daily life at Ashleworth church school. All the children and staff present assemble in a special place in the key stage two classroom which enhances the sense of close community. Worship is mainly led by the headteacher and the Lay Reader who is also a foundation governor. They jointly plan, monitor and evaluate worship each week. The diocesan resource "Values for Life" is used to promote a Christian value each term and this has been effective. However, it is not always felt that the resource meets the particular needs of this school and plans are being made, with diocesan support to adapt, develop and strengthen themes of Christian values further. Children's attitudes to worship are very positive. They enjoy singing very much and can identify hymns which are linked to Bible stories such as "Cross over the Road" and the parable of the Good Samaritan. Children are not formally involved in evaluating worship as yet, but in discussion did express their satisfaction with the way it is at present. However, during the worship observed it was noted that children were mainly passive which prompted one child later to comment that it would be good to "join in a bit more." Worship engages the children very well because the themes are interesting and relevant. For instance, on the day of the inspection, the headteacher and his assistant very effectively demonstrated that the ingredients used in the making of gingerbread men could be used to symbolise the Christian values and attitudes needed to achieve their own personal aspirations. The "Open the Book" team lead worship each week, re-enacting Bible stories

with the active participation of the children. This way of promoting Christ's teaching is thoroughly enjoyed by all and has been very effective. For instance, children understood the value Thankfulness from the way that one of the ten lepers said thank you after being healed. Worship very effectively promotes spiritual development by its focus on reflection and prayer. Children understand Anglican traditions well. Recently a child friendly explanation of the Lord's Prayer has been written and discussed at length with the children, giving them a fuller understanding of the prayer they say regularly in worship. Response prayers are said in church services together with an all age Anglican liturgy. However, a candle is not lit as part of daily worship to signify the presence of the light of Christ or as a focal point for worship. The school's regular visits to church to celebrate the major Christian festivals and at other times such as Mothering Sunday unite the school, parents, families and village and greatly enrich the lives of the children.

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

Over the last year, the new headteacher has provided strong leadership in developing the Christian foundation of this small village school. He has strengthened the school's Christian vision and the way that Christian values impact on the lives of the whole school community. However at present these values are wide ranging and the school leadership have not started the process of refining a core set of values which can be identified as enriching the school's distinctive Christian character in its daily life. Parents are united in their wholehearted support for the school's values and are very appreciative of how they impact on their children's behaviour. They talk of the school as an extended family with all children playing together and behaving in a very supportive way towards each other as siblings might do. Parents also notice the way children reflect on questions posed by the headteacher in worship and how their children engage them in discussions on spiritual issues. Parents feel strongly that they are fully included in all aspects of school life and particularly are involved informally in the school's self evaluation process. Their opinions and views are regularly sought in newsletters and any issues raised are promptly addressed. A group of parents meet with the Lay Reader on a monthly basis to "chat and pray" about matters pertaining to the church school and its development. A group of governors called the "ethos and well being committee" has been formed and is beginning to play its role in evaluating the school as church school. As yet monitoring the school's distinctive Christian character is not embedded although as the Lay Reader commented the culture within school is one of "continuous improvement." Religious Education is well led by the headteacher. Wherever possible he is ensuring that RE is being placed at the heart of the school's new creative curriculum. The RE curriculum now is providing essential opportunities to enrich and widen the children's lives and prepare for life in Britain beyond the village. Professional and spiritual development for staff and governors are given a high priority and links with the Diocese are good. The partnership between the church, school and parents is exceptionally strong. Over recent months working with the incumbent and PCC, the recently licensed Lay Reader has united these groups by combining services at church and placing the church school all-age services at the heart of village life. This was reflected in the recent Christingle and forthcoming Mother's Day service, taking place at the end of the school day. The lives of the village, church and school are exceptionally well integrated and communications between all three are excellent with school newsletters advertising church events and services and the parish magazine including news from school. Local residents volunteer to work within school and are a highly valued part of the school community. Fundraising by the PTFA is widely supported across the whole local community. The school is outward looking and has plans in place to forge links with communities within the UK and overseas. This small village school is a truly Christian family serving its local community.

SIAS report, March 2011, Ashleworth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, The Green, Ashleworth, Gloucester, GL19 4HT