

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Great Missenden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Combined School

Church Street
Great Missenden
HP16 0AZ

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Dates of inspection: 7th February 2013

Date of last inspection: 13th December 2006

School's unique reference number: 110427

Headteacher: Rozalyn Thomson

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

School context

Great Missenden is a large school in an advantaged socio-economic area. It has a reputation for ensuring the successful integration and development of all children, especially those with learning difficulties. The majority of pupils are White British

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Missenden as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The Christian character of the school enables Christian values to permeate practice and policy, fully reflecting the motto 'Believe and achieve'. Christian love provides a welcome for everyone, who is seen as an individual with his or her own unique talents. There is great joy nurturing each child to achieve his or her potential within this school and wider Christian community.

Established strengths

- The leadership and role models of the head and deputy that inspire the highly effective team - work of staff and governors.
- The learning environment that enables children to achieve academic and personal success.
- The quality and impact of worship and the inclusion policy that enable pupils to understand and value the needs of each other.
- The sense of community that shows Christian love in action throughout the school.
- The links with the church and regular presence of clergy that consistently reinforce the Christian character of the school.

Focus for development

The inspection has found no significant areas for development beyond those identified by on-going cycle of self-review and action planning.

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

There is a powerful ethos based on a set of Christian values that pervade the whole of the fabric, routines and policy of this school. Pupils readily relate actions to Christian values and the teachings of Jesus, explaining 'our values are part of everyday life to make things better.' There is a spiritual depth to the whole school. Every action is a reflection of the Christian faith in action and the obvious feeling of togetherness and joy in learning together. Children describe lessons being fun because 'our teachers want us to learn.' Philosophical thinking is developed throughout the school by the effective use of De Bono's thinking hats and the 'Deep Thought Club'. Pupils are articulate, confident and mature in their explanations and can readily relate how displaying one value leads to another, for example, respect and love. Pupils are also very aware of how values are shared in major religions. The school has a great welcome for all pupils and maintains its reputation for supporting statemented pupils who are fully integrated into the everyday life of the school, supported by staff and peers. 'Food for Life' is another example of how the school shares its aims of the best for everyone. The school has established a successful kitchen that uses locally sourced produce, as well as that grown by pupils to present high quality hot meals. These ensure that lunchtime is another shared learning experience with tablecloths, napkins and no plastic plates or cutlery. Pupils are regularly involved in preparation of food for the 'Restaurant Project' and enjoy half termly markets to sell produce. Pupils take responsibility for younger pupils and enjoy the trust and responsibility given to them by staff in 'take over day' when Year six pupils teach the rest of the school for a day. Children understand that not everyone is as privileged as they are. Each class is involved in nominating and supporting a charity as well as sponsoring a child in Africa and a school in India. The Christian character of the school is reflected in displays, often with reflective questions. The school is involved in a range of projects and visits and has a wide range of outdoor facilities that further develop thinking skills, spiritual awareness and reflection.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is the time when the whole school community joins together to share, celebrate and reflect on the Christian values that underpin the ethos and life of the school. The very enthusiastic coordinator ensures consistency throughout the week, providing a framework for all staff to develop themes delivered through a wide range of formats. The incumbent or curate introduces each new theme with links to Bible stories, developed during the week. The presence of clergy and church members in school results in a community that enjoys being together and worshipping as a natural part of life in and out of school. On-going monitoring by the coordinator, pupil evaluation and comments from governors inform development. Regular meetings between the incumbent, foundation governor and coordinator enable the impact of worship to be assessed. They also ensure that worship is inclusive of all. Acts of worship are innovative, vibrant and illustrate the importance of worship to adults and pupils. Pupils sing joyfully and with meaning. Year 3 pupils led a well-planned explanation of Lent. The use of signing by pupils and staff reflects the commitment to inclusivity. Prayer has a central role in the school and ensures that worship goes beyond assembly, through the use of prayer corners and class prayers. Pupils contribute to a prayer book used in assembly. Pupils have a mature attitude to prayer, explaining that 'when we talk to God, He answers in a mental rather than physical way.' A range of out of school activities and clubs encourage and support the spiritual awareness of pupils. The refectory group and assembly club explore ideas for worship or the chance to write prayers that are offered by the clergy during worship. The regular visits to church by children builds their confidence in leading worship during Easter, Christmas and harvest. The links between church and school are reinforced by the daily café in Oldham hall, the original school building.

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

The head and deputy have an inspirational vision to ensure that 'every child has the best opportunity to learn in a Christian environment' which is shared by staff and governors. Christian values and pastoral care underpin the Christian character of the school as 'everything is seen by God.' Staff are a highly effective partnership, reinforced by curriculum and team building sessions. Foundation governors, including the vicar, review the ethos and links with the church. This results in a well-informed and active exploration of the distinctive Christian character of the school. Meetings open with a prayer for guidance recognising the opportunities for challenge. Christian values drive the actions and decision-making at all levels, including, for example, extending the admission number to enable a statemented child and siblings to join the school. The school development plan reflects the creative approach to awe and wonder, with spiritual targets for on-going debate and review of 'what are we about.' The support for pupils and their individual needs also involves supporting their families. Parents understand initiatives in school to support their children's learning because of well planned Information sessions, for example philosophical thinking and De Bono's hats. Parents are full of praise for the work and support of the school especially in times of difficulty. They particularly recognise the consistency of approach of staff, the respect of pupils for each other and the links to the Christian values of the school. Typical of the many positive comments are 'Children recognise and respect achievement at all levels. They are not judgemental of differences but aware of the strengths and limitations of each other.' Parents also recognise the close links with the church and local community, stating 'Church is an extension of school where children grow into the spiritual space that belongs to them.' A successful Parents' Association raises large sums that are ploughed back to create further learning opportunities for their children.