

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Ashley, Church of England (VA), Primary School**

Ashley Road  
Walton on Thames  
Surrey KT12 1HX

#### **Diocese of Guildford**

Local authority: Surrey  
Date of inspection: 19/11/2012  
Date of last inspection: 26/03/2007  
School's unique reference number: 131052  
Headteacher: Mr Richard Dunne  
Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett (NSI 201)

#### **School context**

Ashley is a larger than average primary school with 389 pupils on roll. The school has grown considerably since the previous inspection and is now two-form entry throughout apart from Year 6. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of children are from a white British background. The proportion with English as an additional language is below the national average. Innovative and extensive new buildings have recently been opened.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashley as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The Christian ethos at Ashley CE Primary School is made distinctive by its explicit values. These are based on Christian teaching and are lived out in the everyday life of the school, underpinning relationships and the approach to learning. This makes a significant difference to the quality of the learning environment and the opportunities for pupils to develop a personal spirituality.

#### **Established strengths**

- The openness with which pupils talk about matters of faith and belief.
- The extent to which Christian values contribute to the development of the whole child both academically and personally.
- The quality of understanding amongst the headteacher and key staff in what it means in practice to be a church school

#### **Focus for development**

- Revisit the school's interpretation of spiritual development to deepen understanding and practice among both adults and pupils in the school community.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning in religious education by encouraging pupils to acquire a language through which they can express complex concepts at greater depth and extend this to the whole curriculum.
- Explore ways to enhance the links between the school and church communities.

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

The school has moved forward in its Christian distinctiveness since the previous inspection. One of the successes has been the extent to which values based on Christian teaching have become embedded in the life of the school. A set of values is actively taught through collective worship, reflection time and in school life generally but moreover, these values have become part of the ethos and culture of the school and integral to relationships between pupils and adults. This is evident when talking with pupils who say, for example, that it is necessary to forgive, not just because they have been told it is the right thing to do, but because they need to forgive to be able to 'move on'. Pupils know that they can use the example of Jesus to understand the importance of forgiveness. It is this deeper understanding of values that has contributed to the excellent quality of relationships, based on trust and respect between children and adults in school. It has also made a difference to the quality of the curriculum where learning is focussed on key questions that encourage pupils to enquire and seek answers to difficult concepts. Key staff in school have a clear grasp of how this approach can develop the pupils' spirituality through reflection and the use of searching questions. With the considerable changes in staff over the last eighteen months, the school is keen to look again at how adults and pupils interpret spirituality and to develop a consistent approach across the whole curriculum. Attitudes towards learning are very positive. Pupils enjoy their work and engage in it with enthusiasm, responding well in lessons. They say that they feel safe in school and make good friends. An important aspect of the school's Christian ethos is the sense of stewardship for the world and environment. This is evident in the many ways that pupils are encouraged to think about how to take care of resources such as not wasting water at lunch time.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is outstanding because of the impact that worship messages have on the development of the pupil's spirituality and their understanding of how values based on Christian teaching can help them live their lives. It is also outstanding because adults in the school community share this view as well. This was seen in the excellent acts of worship observed during the inspection. The headteacher very effectively drew together themes about the value of freedom to explore with pupils how the freedom to make a choice involves responsibility. Moreover, the theme was explicit in explaining how belief in God helps Christians make the right choices, which sets them free. These messages are delivered in an appropriate way and relate back to the pupils' own experiences. A weekly time for reflection when each class has the opportunity to think more deeply about the themes, is an excellent way for teachers to explore the message in the more personal setting of their own class. This was seen in two classes where the main worship theme was reinforced at the appropriate level for the age of the pupils.

The school has also effectively addressed one of the areas for development from the previous report in giving more opportunities to evaluate the impact of collective worship. Collective worship is recognised as a distinct time in the school day. The use of a table with a lit candle, cross and Bible help to create an atmosphere of this being an important time. Both younger and older pupils agree that collective worship is special and when asked, say that prayer in collective worship is a valued expression of their church school status.

Pupils have a very good understanding of prayer and welcome the opportunities they have in the school day to be still and calm and to pray. Pupils also appreciate that the visits to the parish church to celebrate major festivals, together with the involvement of the vicar in leading acts of worship, are integral aspects of being a church school. The RE leader has responsibility for the planning of collective worship. Through the use of key questions, themes are given a clear focus which ensures that worship has high impact. Pupils are able to articulate the impact of these themes on their own lives and are very positive about the place of worship in the life of the school.

The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Standards in religious education (RE) are high. Current data from assessments in RE show that pupils achieve very well compared to national expectations, with a significant number attaining higher levels. This compares well with achievement in other core subjects and pupils make good progress in RE across the school. The school has recently refined its assessment procedures in RE. This is making it easier to track individual pupil progress and help inform action to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The RE coordinator has accurately identified the need to embed the new assessment procedures as a priority for development. The overall quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good, with many elements that reflected the extent to which teachers give careful thought to the purpose of what the pupils learn. This is reflected in the high quality of the planning of RE in which the identification of a key learning question helps to focus learning more directly on the meaning behind the pupils' studies. This approach is successful but sometimes is not applied consistently throughout the lesson. The school is therefore keen to explore how they can help pupils acquire the language through which they can express difficult RE concepts at greater depth, particularly in the parts of lessons in which pupils explore ideas. Pupils have a very good knowledge of RE and are able to apply this in their learning to make connections between concepts. For example, older pupils were challenged to link the story of Adam and Eve with Good Friday, by exploring forgiveness and choice. Pupils were excited and engaged in this lesson and used a good level of vocabulary to describe what makes a perfect or imperfect world. Similarly, younger pupils were enthusiastic and attentive in their lesson and enjoyed the opportunities to be active using drama to retell the story of Samuel.

The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education.

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

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in embedding Christian values in to the life of the school and in making them relevant to the pupils and the adults in the school community as well. For example, parents speak about how the monthly value is discussed at home with their children. The headteacher has very successfully led the school in creating an ethos in which these values underpin both personal development and learning. Both of these aspects are increasingly being linked with the pupils' spiritual development. The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the purpose of being a church school and is very clear about how this can continue to evolve. He is fully supported in this by key members of staff and governors and the school therefore has a good capacity to improve. He is passionate about the development of the whole child and this valuing of the individual makes an impact on every pupil, even in a large school as this. The RE leader ensures that the subject has a high profile in the overall curriculum. She has made sure that an emphasis on the teaching of Christianity meets guidance from the National Society and that this is balanced by the study of other world religions. She has a very good grasp of pupil achievement through careful scrutiny of their work and has accurately identified what needs to be done to take the subject forward. Together with her leadership of collective worship, the RE leader makes an important contribution to the development of the school's Christian character. Governors are fully supportive of the school's church status and value the contribution it makes to the pupils' education. They have a good understanding of the school's Christian ethos and are effective in ensuring that it is continually evolving. The vicar is supported by the parish youth and children's minister in contributing to the spiritual life of the school. They are both involved in the daily life through leading acts of worship and in providing experiences such as the Advent Walk. The links with the parish church have made further progress since the previous inspection and the school is keen to explore with the church community what that link means to the people involved. The parents spoken to feel strongly that the school's Christian ethos nurtures their children's spirituality and that this makes an impact on the way that they lead their lives. They say that this is evident in the work the children do to support local and national charities and through projects to improve the local environment. In particular, parents agree that the school's approach to its Christian ethos gives their children a more informed and positive view of both the local community and of national and global perspectives.