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Youth and Education

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STATUTORY INSPECTION
of
ANGLICAN SCHOOLS
S48

INSPECTION REPORT
for

Eckington Church of England Voluntary Controlled First
School
School Lane
Persnore
Worcestershire,
WR10 3AU

Head Teacher: Gail Whiting

Inspector: Margaret James (NS no 698)

Inspection Date: 9th July 2012

Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Eckington Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

School Lane, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 3AU

Diocese of Worcester

Worcestershire LA

Date of inspection: 9th July 2012

Date of last inspection: 8th and 9th June 2009

School's URN: 116806

Name of Headteacher: Gail Whiting

Inspector: Margaret James NS 698

Context

Eckington Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School is a smaller than average school which serves the village of Eckington as well as the surrounding area. The children are taught in 4 classes, 2 of which are mixed age groups. The school is to be found in the heart of the village within short walking distance of the parish church. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The percentage of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found in schools nationally as is the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Eckington Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School as a Church of England school is good.

Eckington First School is a good Church of England school. It is a school where care and respect for each member of the community are paramount and underpin all relationships, decisions and initiatives. Christian values are implicit in all aspects of the life of the school.

Established strengths

- The headteacher's vision for the school as a church school
- The supportive and committed staff team who share the vision of the headteacher
- Mutual care and respect between all members of the school community
- The status and impact of prayer and worship in the life of the school

Focus for development

- The full governing body to establish formal systems of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's distinctive Christian character
- Involvement of all stakeholders in reviews of the impact of the school's Christian values
- Teachers to plan and identify opportunities across the curriculum to develop pupils' spirituality

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

All stakeholders are aware of the Christian foundation of the school and many support and appreciate it. The headteacher has a desire for Christian distinctiveness to permeate every aspect of school life. The impact of this on the school environment, for example through the peace corners, is positive. Pupils are very aware of these places for quiet reflection and make good use of them. The impact of the school's Christian character and ethos on relationships and attitudes in the school is also good. Pupils say that the school *'has its own speciality...everyone is kind to each other'*. Pupil behaviour is very good. Values education and spiritual development form part of teaching and learning in religious education (RE) which makes a good contribution to the school's Christian distinctiveness. Opportunities to develop the children's spirituality are taken when they arise in other subjects across the curriculum. However, the development point from the previous inspection to 'monitor, evaluate and review the spiritual development of children' has not yet been fully met. Christian values of respect and care drive all that the school seeks to achieve. The impact of this on many aspects of the school day is good. The high profile in the school of pupil voice initiatives shows children that their views and opinions are valued and makes them feel respected by their teachers. Despite the relatively mono-ethnic nature of the school and local community, teaching staff enable pupils to develop a good understanding of and respect for people from other cultures and beliefs. This is done mainly through teaching and learning

opportunities in RE. A strong team spirit exists in the school. This is exemplified by children who describe the importance of carrying out their responsibilities no matter how small saying, *'because that's what makes it all work'*.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship at Eckington First School takes place at the beginning of each morning with the intention that it provides a meaningful start to the day for the whole school community. Worship is based on the Values for Life materials and focuses on 18 Christian values over a 3 year cycle. Daily worship is mainly led by adults and children from the worship council are involved in various aspects of it. The worship council also instigated whole school initiatives such as the establishment of peace corners in all classrooms. Pupils very much enjoy being involved in the leadership of collective worship when they have the opportunity. Class assemblies are led entirely by pupils and, as seen on the day of the inspection, Christian values and Bible stories are the main focus of these times. Adults who lead worship use targeted open questions to encourage pupils to reflect on the relevance of the message of worship. Pupils respond very well to these opportunities to reflect and appreciate the help given to them by staff to understand the message of collective worship. They say that, *'they tell us something at the end that will stick in our minds so that we understand'*. They describe how time to reflect helps them to learn from what they have heard and clear their minds. They also say that prayer helps them to do this. Prayer is a very strong feature of the school and pupils have an excellent understanding of its meaning. They describe how it is a time to, *'worship God, think about him and think about what other people need'*. The prayer tree in the hall is very popular with pupils. They bring prayer requests which they have discussed with their families at home into school and hang them onto the tree. The prayers are then used during some times of whole school worship. The headteacher has planned different ways of praying on each day in collective worship to enable all pupils to engage as fully as possible with prayer. The vicar ensures that elements of Anglican liturgy, such as sharing the peace and saying response prayers are included in acts of worship so that any pupils who attend church will feel more comfortable and familiar with the services. The school attends a service in the church at the beginning of each term as well as celebrating the major Christian festivals there. Pupils speak of their enjoyment of collective worship and of the ways in which it helps and affirms them. They are fully engaged and sing with enthusiasm. They say that staff know how much they enjoy collective worship because they are always *'positive and cheerful'* after it.

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

The headteacher has a desire and commitment for Christian values and vision to permeate the life of the school. She has set up a prayer group with a governor and member of the parochial church council (PCC) in order to root the school in prayer. Her vision and ethos are shared by staff who report how Christian values underpin all relationships, decisions and behaviour. This results in a very supportive ethos amongst the staff team. Governors also share this vision and foundation governors work closely with the headteacher to ensure that Christian values permeate the life of the school. The recent review of the school motto *'caring and sharing, achieving and believing together'* brought the whole school community together in a shared understanding of what the school stands for. Building on the school's Christian ethos is part of the school development plan. All stakeholders say that the school is a supportive, welcoming and caring community. Relationships with parents are excellent. Parents are kept informed about the values theme of the term through the weekly newsletter and many are keen to support and reinforce this at home. Relationships between the school, the church and the local community are also excellent and are an important aspect of the life of the school. This helps children to see themselves as part of a joined up community where they feel safe, trusted and respected. The vicar is viewed as part of the school team and her involvement makes a significant contribution to the school's distinctive Christian character. All members of the small staff team take on responsibilities and the headteacher is skilled at developing staff and enabling them to take on new challenges.