



SS Philip & James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Navigation Way, Oxford. OX2 6AB



Type of school (Infant, Primary, Middle, Secondary etc)	SS Philip & James Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Status (VA, VC or Foundation, CTC or Academy)	Voluntary Aided
Diocese	Oxford
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Date of inspection	17 th January 2008
Date of last inspection	June 2003
School's Unique reference number	123214
Name of Headteacher	Ms Irene Conway
Name of Chair of Governors	Mrs Corinna Redman
Inspector's name and NS inspector's number	Gillian Allison 142

Context

The school is larger than average. The majority of children are White British and the remainder come from a variety of heritages. There are a significant number of children, currently 10%, whose first language is not English. Pupil turnover is higher than usual. Last year the number of newcomers additional to the Foundation Stage intake, was 51 out of a school population of 315.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of SS Philip & James as a Church of England school are good

The governors' vision for the Church school is realised in this inclusive, caring community. The Christian ethos is greatly strengthened by the partnership with the local church. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils reflect the commitment to shared values.

Established strengths

- The leadership's clear vision of what it is to be an inclusive Church of England school
- The excellent relationships which encourage all to flourish
- The links with the Church which enhance pastoral care and collective worship
- The quality of reflection time which supports very good spiritual development

Focus for development

- To consolidate the introduction of the new religious education syllabus
- To refine the evaluation of collective worship to support the best experience for all

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

The school's Christian foundation is the bedrock of its very strong ethos. Commitment to loving care and the belief that "each person is of infinite worth" is modelled by staff and strengthened by the support of the local church. Pupils thrive because they feel secure and well supported. They are encouraged to grow educationally and personally and all achievement is celebrated. Newcomers, of whom there are several throughout the year, are quickly assimilated into this inclusive community. The welcome extends beyond the children to their families. The atmosphere around the school is relaxed and friendly, reflecting the excellent example of staff. Children's care for one another is seen throughout the school; in small kindnesses and courtesies. It is demonstrated more formally, for example, through votes in School Council. From collective worship and religious education children understand how Biblical teachings relate to the school's values and how these apply to everyday life. The school's monthly value becomes, as a parent put it, "Part of a child's vocabulary". Spiritual development is a strength of the school. Children use reflection time to very good effect because they are given time to think and a richness of ideas to explore. Adults and children appreciate time for prayer and many speak of its positive influence on the school. Part of the strength of the school community is its active involvement in the wider community and, indeed, the world wide community. These partnerships, many of which are church linked, extend learners' understanding of cultures and beliefs, preparing them for richer participation in adult life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is very important and is well planned and resourced. Staff show commitment through leadership and in the way they worship alongside the children, joining, for example, in speaking, singing and signing songs and prayers with Years 3 and 4. Much care is taken to ensure that worship reflects the Christian character of the school and is open to all members of the community. Families of varied faith positions speak positively about the contribution which worship makes to children's personal development. Many join the Friday assemblies and special celebrations in the local church, strengthening the sense of community. Children's attitudes to worship are positive. They are very enthusiastic about the weekly assemblies led by the clergy and enjoy worshipping in the church. Used to thinking and discussion, they respond well and contribute with enthusiasm. The school takes note of responses to worship to help planning and is devising a system of evaluation to support future development. Pupils' spiritual and moral growth is well supported by collective worship. Moral teachings are meaningful because they relate to children's own experiences and the world around them. Children are confident to explore ideas about faith, because faith is an area for open discussion in this school. Prayer and time for reflection are used very effectively. This is because both take place at other times and in other settings in school, and their purpose is well understood. Children's prayers, written and extempore, are commonly used alongside The Lord's Prayer. In a Year 2 class, for example, worship finished with a child's short, spontaneous prayer which exactly captured the theme.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Teaching and learning are good. Regular assessment shows that achievement is good and that pupils are making good progress as they move through the school. Teachers understand where pupils are in their learning and plan to meet their needs. In Year 1 pupils spoke confidently about the Bible and showed excellent understanding of the story of Zacchaeus. This worked because outstanding teaching used dramatic storytelling to engage every pupil and focussed the questioning to achieve the lesson objectives. At Key Stage 2, pupils explored the sacred writings of different faith communities, building religious education skills and understanding. Well paced teaching with effective use of reflection enabled all to make progress in learning. Pupils are very positive about RE and apply themselves to learning because stimulating activities challenge them. They make lively comments about RE displays and Year 6 guides give lucid explanations of the symbols in the stained glass windows. RE makes a good contribution to spiritual and moral development. There are coherent links with worship and PHSE, especially in giving insights to moral issues. Older children speak of growing understanding of other cultures, enriched by contributions from visitors of different faiths, including parents. The ethos of respect for all creates fertile ground for openness and understanding of all religious views. Children and their parents feel that RE helps children to make informed decisions about belief. The coordinator gives guidance about the new scheme of work and teachers are working in teams to introduce up-to-date ideas. They are enthusiastic about the new approach to teaching through key questions, as this captures children's interest and stimulates thinking. The coordinator has undertaken training to support the new scheme and has made a good start on disseminating information to staff.

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

The headteacher, supported by a close- working staff team and governors, has a clear vision of what it means to be a Church of England school serving this community. This vision has been carefully developed to promote the intentions of the Trust Deed in a modern environment. Stakeholders understand the vision because it is clearly communicated in words and deeds. Governors' meetings begin with prayer, and staff and parent prayer groups support the spiritual life of the school. The partnership with the local church is very good indeed. The clergy's rapport with children, staff and parents strengthens the vision and enables strong pastoral support. There are valued partnerships with faith groups in the local community and their involvement brings rich spiritual and cultural input to school life. The school has made strides in self evaluation of the church school through focussed staff meetings, governors' meetings and through pupil questionnaires. This is informing school improvement. Governors have identified the need to extend evaluation to better inform strategic thinking about church school distinctiveness. The headteacher, senior staff and governors are very supportive of RE. They support the coordinator's plans to further strengthen the subject through effective implementation of the new syllabus. Governors' support for collective worship is clear from the excellent statement in the prospectus, designed to help parents understand what is offered. They support the school's efforts to improve evaluation of worship, so that the best experience can be sustained.

