

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Stretton Handley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Beresford Lane
Woolley Moor
Alfreton
Derbyshire
DE55 6FH

Diocese: Derby

Local authority: Derbyshire
Dates of inspection: 6.3.2012
Date of last inspection: 13.1.2009
School's unique reference number: 112859
Headteacher: Julie Dunbar
Inspector's name and number: Margaret Fell 588

School context

Stretton Handley is a small rural, village primary school with 53 pupils on roll. Many children come from outlying villages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average and only a few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is above average. A new Headteacher was appointed in September 2011 and two other members of the teaching staff were recently appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stretton Handley CE VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The school has an exceptionally warm and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils and adults feel valued by the school and by each other. Pupils are caring and supportive of one another and appreciate the care and individual attention they receive from adults in school. The staff and governors are committed to promoting the distinctiveness of the Christian character of the school through a shared vision. Learners are happy, relaxed and secure, enjoying the provision of a superb outside area which fosters their appreciation of the beauty of their surroundings and their responsibility towards the natural world.

Established strengths

- Strong leadership from the Headteacher and governing body which gives clear direction for school improvement
- Close links with the local church community
- The provision of quiet areas for peace and reflection
- The school Buddy system valued by all stakeholders

Focus for development

- Involve the children in the delivery of collective worship
- Extend the teaching about other faiths and global awareness
- Develop spiritual opportunities to enable the children to be calm and reflective

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

Christian values and principles are at the heart of the work of the school. Pupils learn in a caring and supportive environment where their achievements are recognised and celebrated. The strong Christian ethos is evident through high quality displays and artefacts which can be seen in all areas of the school. Recent art projects enabled the children to make stained glass crosses and the competition to design a logo for a new badge has resulted in a school uniform emblem which highlights the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Relationships

are underpinned by the school buddy system and the high regard the children have for their teachers. A group of children agreed 'the teachers are the best bit about this school.' They are justifiably proud of their school and are very enthusiastic about opportunities and activities provided for them, such as bird watching and the football team. The outside area provides creatively planned, quiet places for peace and reflection and the children but as yet this resource and the skills it could develop are underused. During lessons children are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings on a wide range of issues but with the exception of Judaism, the children had very little knowledge of other world faiths and traditions. They were very keen to maintain a link with a village in Africa and one girl said 'it was so exciting when we got a letter back and had it translated so we could understand it'. Several charity events, organised by the school council, such as shoe boxes and Pro Kick are supported during the year, making children aware of the needs of others. Links with the local church are very positive and are a strength of the school. Parents are happy with the school and know that if they have a problem they can come into school at any time.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is well planned and follows themes linked to Christian values and the Christian calendar. The themes are communicated to the parents via a newsletter which includes a Bible reading, activities and ideas of books to read, encouraging whole family involvement. The worship team of upper junior pupils take a pride in the way they set up the hall and start the service with the lighting of a candle. They also lead the responses and use prayers they have written. Seating is arranged in family groups, encouraging the children to feel part of the Christian family and most children are engaged during worship. Children enjoy lively acts of worship, from a variety of different visitors, which include story telling, the use of stimulating artefacts, music and drama. The children are inspired by the creativity and expertise of these presenters and now feel they are ready to take an even greater role in the planning and delivery of acts of worship. The Lord's Prayer is known and understood by the children and several musical settings are used. Prayers are used during the school day and the prayer tree at the front of the school is a strong reminder that this is a Christian school. A parent said, 'Our children are comfortable with praying, the school makes it natural to talk to God'. The school has very close links with St Mark's church and the vicar and several members of the church community are regular visitors to the school, leading prayers and contributing to collective worship. The vicar said the 'relationship with the school is based on support and mutual affirmation'. The children enjoy their visits to the church and their work is often used for displays in the church. The school communion service, 'Wafer and Grapes', held regularly in the school or in the church has enabled the children to have a mature understanding of the meaning of the shared meal. The weekly achievement assembly recognises sporting and academic success but also highlights acts of friendship, kindness and thoughtfulness.

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

The Headteacher and the governors of the school provide strong leadership and are fully committed to promoting the school as a church school. They have a clear, shared vision for future developments and the school improvement plan includes a comprehensive section for developing the distinctive Christian character of the school. Governors have reflected carefully on the impact that the Christian ethos makes on the children's personal development and have taken an active part in the writing of the toolkit. Parents value the connection with the church and several of them said they felt comfortable with its 'gentle Christianity'. They feel Christian values are evident in the way the school cares for the children and the way the children are encouraged to care for each other. Several parents said that this was the main reason why they had moved their children to the school from other areas. The Headteacher and governors speak highly of the impact and value of ongoing professional development with the diocese for collective worship and RE and the new RE coordinator is being well supported as she takes on this role. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and Stretton Handley and is firmly established as a Christian school.

