

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Holywell Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School

Red Lion Close  
Cranfield  
Bedford  
MK43 0JA

#### Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Central Bedfordshire  
Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011  
Date of last inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008  
School's unique reference number: 109712  
Headteacher: Mr Peter Haddon  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lilian Weatherley 42

#### School context

Holywell Church of England Aided Middle school is a larger than average middle school in the Diocese of St Albans. Although most pupils are white and British there are a significant number of pupils who come from overseas. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the number of pupils with special educational needs is well below the national average. The school has achieved both the healthy schools status and a sports mark. The catchment area is defined by the civil parishes of Cranfield and Wootton and the Anglican parishes of St Peter and St Paul Cranfield and St Mary's Wootton.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holywell C of E Aided Middle School as a Church of England school are 'good'.

Since its last inspection in 2008, Holywell school has made significant progress as a Church of England school. The headteacher and the governing body have a clear vision of what makes an 'outstanding' church school and are working hard to establish this. The development of the distinctive Christian ethos and values education has had a significant impact across the school. Pupils are well behaved, thoughtful, courteous and considerate. Incidents of bullying are extremely rare and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. Christian principles of justice, faith and service lie at the heart of the school.

#### Established strengths

- The strong Christian ethos and the impact of the recent work on values education
- The strong leadership of the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors
- The school is a safe, inclusive and well behaved community
- The pupils enjoy school and attendance is outstanding
- The learning environment created for the pupils

#### Focus for development

- Improve the quality and opportunities for worship
- Improve the opportunities for spiritual development and reflection in worship and across the curriculum

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

Holywell C of E Aided Middle school is a good church school where its pupils are encouraged to flourish as individuals. The aims of the school are known and followed by all members of the school community. Pupils are fully aware of the Christian character of the school and speak confidently and positively about being at a church school. It is a welcoming, caring educational community where Christian values are central. The recent work on values education has enhanced this. Pupils are courteous, polite and well behaved around the school and in classes and eager to discuss the different values that they see as important. Relationships at all levels are excellent and all pupils including those with special educational needs are well cared for.

The outside play areas have been carefully designed to support the younger pupils at break and lunchtimes and give shelter in bad weather. The opportunity to visit the 'Zone' also reflects the care shown to those pupils who prefer a quiet space to the hustle and bustle of the playground. All pupils are happy and enjoy school and this is exemplified by the outstanding attendance records. When asked to write something that they disliked about their school one school council member said it was difficult as 'I like everything'.

The recent improvements to the building have substantially improved the learning environment. The new notice board and values etched into the windows in the hall and entrance clearly reflect what the school sees as important to all who enter. Pupils are given opportunities to attend a wide range of extra-curricular activities including a wide range of musical groups, as well as a variety of sports. In all areas the pupils show care and concern for each other and see themselves as part of a wider global community. Social cohesion is excellent and the school ensures that pupils are aware of the needs of their local communities as well as other national and international concerns. The pupils recognise the importance of Christian support for those in need or in a position of disadvantage and are keen to support a variety of charities both local and international. Pupils speak of how their school encourages them to look beyond the school gates to the wider world. In doing so they participate in, share and promote a Christian vision of a more equitable, just and tolerant society. The exceptional art work displayed across the school is indicative of the manner in which the school encourages high standards, imagination and creativity.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is 'good'.**

The worship at Holywell is planned and clearly plays an important part in the school day. The values education has involved whole staff training and has played a key role in developing the themes for worship. Pupils have positive attitudes to the worship that is provided and this in turn has an impact on their actions. They see the relevance of Christian teachings on, for example, right and wrong and other Christian values, irrespective of their faith or lack of faith. The pupils speak warmly about the worship and how they appreciate opportunities for silence and reflection. One young man suggested that the school might consider a memorial garden as his previous school had one and it was a lovely place to be. The school is aware that the next step is to improve these opportunities for reflection and pupils' spiritual development. As the school moves forward with this, it might also consider an indoor space for pupils to use for prayer and reflection. As one pupil suggested 'It would be good to have a quiet place to go if you are upset or just want to be alone.' The pupils have many interesting and creative ideas for worship and the school might consider creating a worship group with members of pupils and staff.

Opportunities for developing the learners' understanding of Anglican traditions and practice are developing. St Peter and St Paul Cranfield and St Mary's Wootton are used for services and both clergy are involved in school worship. The Christmas carol service and the introduction of bell ringing to the extra-curricular activities have all improved the church links and made the churches accessible to pupils and parents. The visit to the church to explore prayer and reflection was also very successful and consideration should be given as to how these opportunities could be developed within the curriculum.

### **The effectiveness of the Religious Education is 'good'.**

Standards of attainment and progress in Religious Education are good and equal if not better than other key areas of the curriculum. Although it was only a few weeks into the term and staff were new to the pupils, relationships were good and lessons observed showed that pupils were all fully engaged and motivated. The quality of learning and teaching is good overall and pupils are being challenged both in class and in the tasks set. In the lesson on the life of Martin Luther King and the struggle for black rights pupils were eager to discuss and question, offering thoughtful responses. Assessment has been developing but with a new subject leader and a new Bedfordshire syllabus pending it will provide the opportunity for a complete review of the subject and its assessment. It will also give more opportunities to include topics which enhance the school's Anglican heritage. An example is the recent work on Christian marriage and the re-enactment of a wedding held at the Church. Resources are currently good but these will also need to be reviewed once the new syllabus is launched. The new RE subject leader, and the headteacher, who also teaches RE, are keen to ensure that creative and imaginative RE becomes a central core aspect of this church school.

The new Humanities block, officially opened by Bishop Richard in 2010, makes a clear statement as to the important position of RE in the school. The school has excellent links with the diocese and the RE adviser is a regular visitor to the school.

All pupils interviewed said how much they liked and enjoyed RE and felt challenged by the work.

Opportunities for moral, social and cultural development are clearly planned into the current topics but with the revision of the religions and concepts covered more opportunities for pupils' spiritual development should be considered.

Children gain much benefit from the variety of school visits and visitors. The Year 7 three-faiths tour has greatly enhanced the pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Islam and Sikhism.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is 'good'.**

The leadership of the headteacher has had a significant impact on many aspects of the school. As a governor was keen to point out 'The Christian character of the school is strengthened by a head whose own faith is evidently strong and demonstrated by actions that are helping to create our superb school'. Leadership at all levels exudes energy and enthusiasm, encouraging and motivating pupils and providing a clear sense of what a church school can and should offer the communities which it serves.

The senior leadership team and governing body have a clear vision of the values a Church of England school should promote and how these can be presented with a robust sense of purpose, energy and enthusiasm. Although the staff, pupils, parents and governors engage in regular self-evaluation and reviews in order to create a more effective church school, not all stakeholders were involved in the process of reviewing all aspects of the school's distinctive Christian character. This would help all members of the school and wider community to contribute ideas as to how the school can further develop its distinctive nature.

Staff hold an annual residential conference to ensure that a key theme, such as values education, is discussed, understood and will be implemented by all staff. This has been instrumental in moving the school forward and the significant progress made since the last inspection. There is an infectious atmosphere of love for learning and teaching throughout the school with values at its heart. A large majority of parents speak very positively of the way in which the school values their views and opinions and there is strong mutual support between all the partners involved in the school. Pupils identify with the vibrant purpose and energy emanating from the staff, *'I like being here; I like the teachers, classrooms, lessons and values. Holywell is a friendly and happy place'*. Links with the churches are improving since the last inspection and the clergy are regular visitors to the school. The recent building work in St Peter's Church will allow the Church to be used in a creative and special way and further enhance opportunities for prayer, worship and RE.