

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Hertingfordbury Cowper CofE Aided Primary School

Birch Green
Hertford
SG14 2LR

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Dates of inspection:	19 th September 2011
Date of last inspection:	28 th January 2008
School's unique reference number:	117563
Headteacher:	Mrs Alison Richards
Inspector's name and number:	David Morton NS515

School context

Hertingfordbury Cowper CofE Aided Primary School is a smaller than average primary school that has expanded over recent years. Pupils travel to the school from the surrounding towns of Hertford and Welwyn Garden City with a minority living in the village. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals or having special educational needs is low. The school has a historic foundation and benefits from a trust fund attached to that foundation.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hertingfordbury Cowper CofE Aided Primary School as a Church of England school is outstanding

Hertingfordbury Cowper CofE Aided Primary School is a welcoming, supportive Christian community that offers outstanding levels of pupil care and opportunities for spiritual development.

Established strengths

- The welcoming, supportive Christian community
- The outstanding quality of relationships and care for pupils
- The use of the creative curriculum to enhance the teaching of Religious Education
- The outstanding leadership of the head teacher in promoting and developing the school's Christian ethos

Focus for development

- Involve pupils more regularly in the evaluation of Collective Worship
- Systematically record learning outcomes from RE activities undertaken across the curriculum

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

Hertingfordbury Cowper CofE Aided Primary is a welcoming, supportive, Christian community. Parents, governors and staff jointly identify the journey of improvement that the school has undertaken over the past five years. This has seen the school's Christian values become the driving force behind every aspect of improvement and development. Relationships across the school are outstanding. Pupils are relaxed and happy in school and enjoy themselves. Those with special educational needs are integrated sensitively into the whole school community. Poor behaviour is rare and the system of class guardians provides an excellent example of Christian values in action as they offer pastoral care and a listening ear to their fellow pupils. Hertingfordbury Cowper CofE Aided Primary is a Christian community that is growing and developing together. Parents speak highly of the outstanding care that is offered to their children. They clearly attribute this to the schools Christian Ethos which is, in their view, fully inclusive. The school makes good use of its internal accommodation which it is rapidly outgrowing. Its use of the external environment is excellent both in terms of its provision for pupils and its use to support the wider curriculum, which nurtures pupils' spiritual development.

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

This is due to the outstanding commitment of the Headteacher and the parish priest. Together they have worked hard to ensure that the Christian values communicated through Collective Worship are at the heart of the school community. The observed act of worship was outstanding. Conducted in a relaxed, yet reverent atmosphere, pupils participated enthusiastically in an interactive re-telling of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Linked to the school's value programme the act of worship included prayers, a period of reflection and a blessing. Pupils and staff left encouraged and affirmed in their care of others. Participation of the school orchestra on an occasional basis enhances the worship experience and is valued by pupils, one commenting that it made worship more joyful. Whilst acts of worship are outstanding the worshipping environment is restricted due to the limitations of the school hall. It is currently impossible for pupils, parents and staff to join together for worship, to celebrate major Christian festivals or to acknowledge achievement. Plans in place for the construction of a new hall would remedy this and further enhance acts of worship. Planning of Collective Worship is good. It includes a wide range of pupils, staff and external visitors. Current planning reflects a self evaluation exercise undertaken recently and staff hold ongoing discussions about the breadth and quality of collective worship. Less emphasis is placed on pupils evaluating worship on a weekly basis and this should be an area for development.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

RE makes a good contribution to community cohesion and the school ensures that pupils have respect for, and an understanding of, other world religions. RE also contributes well to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils benefit from an open, inclusive environment that enables them to discuss their own faith and the faith of others. Planning for religious education is good but is emerging from a period of transition that has seen the school change from mixed age to single age teaching groups. Teaching and learning is also good. In one observed lesson, story was used effectively to create an atmosphere of awe and wonder, which enabled pupils to reflect on and consider spiritual feelings. Questioning is also used to good effect to promote and facilitate learning. Lessons are well resourced and excellent links have been made to other curriculum areas. These links often produce learning outcomes that are outstanding. However a lack of a systematic means of recording learning leads to inconsistent evidence of pupil progress and ability which is currently good. This is an area the school should address.

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

The leadership of the head teacher is outstanding. She has transformed the school over the past five years into a distinctive Christian community that demonstrates the highest level of care to all. The staff team has, under her leadership, become a strong, cohesive unit committed to the school's shared Christian values. The outstanding pastoral care offered by the school is valued and cherished by parents and by the wider community. This aspect of the school's work is significantly enhanced by the role of the parish priest within school community. His work, alongside the Headteacher, is recognised as making a difference to the school. The Headteacher is supported by a good governing body. Their rigorous approach to managing the school has enabled them to emerge from a difficult year able to fully support school development and improvement. Together with the leadership team they share a commitment to further develop the Christian ethos of the school. This is evidenced by the consistent inclusion, within the School Improvement Plan, of a strand focussing on the development of the school as a church school.

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