

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Milton Ernest CofE VC Lower School
Thurleigh Road,
Milton Ernest
Bedford
MK44 1RF

Diocese: St Albans

Local Authority:	Bedfordshire
Dates of inspection:	02 March 2011
Date of last inspection:	14 May 2008
School's unique reference number:	109613
Headteacher:	Mrs Mary Harris
Inspector's name and number:	Ms Chris Westgarth 44

School context

Milton Ernest is a voluntary controlled Church of England school, accommodated in traditional buildings in the centre of a thriving village community. It is a smaller than average lower school (62 on roll) and most pupils are of white British heritage. Milton Ernest has a lower than average proportion of free school meals and special educational needs. The headteacher shares her time between two schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Milton Ernest as a Church of England school are good

Milton Ernest is a good church school, which is valued by everyone. It is inclusive, all are welcomed and everyone is encouraged to reach their full potential. Pupils receive a good education underpinned by the Christian values of care, love, forgiveness and compassion. Staff have the highest regard for one another and for the pupils in their care and this has a significant impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Established strengths

- The clear vision the leadership team has for the development of Milton Ernest VC school as a church school
- The strong links between the school and church
- The positive attitudes of pupils to every aspect of learning and school life in general

Focus for development

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Collective Worship are effectively undertaken and shared
- Engage pupils in the planning and development of reflection areas outside the classroom

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

Milton Ernest is a school where individuals matter, excellent relationships are nurtured, and all feel valued, supported and listened to. As a result, the school promotes its Christian character well. Good quality acts of worship and the leadership and management of the school as a Church school, coupled with the strong links with the local Church ensure that the school's status as a Church school lies at the heart of its development and ethos. The whole school environment is clean, tidy and well cared for, thus reinforcing the Christian ethos of care and respect for the surroundings and the world we live in. Lunchtimes are calm and orderly with a good family atmosphere. The outside area is delightful and the environmental garden is very beneficial for learning and as a quiet space. There is a strong family feel within the school, with older pupils readily supporting younger ones. Behaviour observed was exemplary and learners were polite and showed respect. There are good opportunities to build relationships and care for each other. This reinforces the inclusivity of Milton Ernest School.– As one pupil commented '*We have a friendship bench, but there's nobody on it because we are all friends and we have our PlayPals*'.

Charitable giving is strong with pupils actively raising money through their mini-fête, as one pupil said '*we like to help people*'. Pupils speak enthusiastically about helping others in this country and overseas. Community cohesion is strong locally and emerging internationally and can be further enhanced by working with the charities that the church supports overseas. Due to the traditional nature of the buildings, accommodation is limited, but the very best use is made of the space available and good use is made of limited display space. The signs and symbols of the Christian religion are clearly displayed in key locations throughout the school.

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

Children enjoy and remember Bible stories. They benefit from and speak positively about their regular worship times in the church. Due to very limited space in the school there is not much opportunity for movement or active participation, however pupils are keen to be involved and respond enthusiastically when appropriate. They enjoy singing and action songs and understand simple liturgical responses. They know and understand the Lord's Prayer – they have a clear

appreciation of right and wrong and the meaning of forgiveness. Planning and monitoring does take place, however at present there is limited evaluation of the impact of worship. Collective Worship themes are based on values and care should be taken to ensure that there is a clear and obvious link between the value and Christian values.

Prayer is said or sung before lunch and also at the start of Governors' meetings. The school council reports that prayer is important to the life of the school, although they sometimes feel that they do not have enough time or places to sit and think. A recent survey on Collective Worship (Assemblies), instigated by the School Council showed that pupils enjoy worship times and stories in particular. Equally they report that the monthly worship time in Church is a strength and well supported by parents, governors and community members. As a result adults and children have developed a respect for the special atmosphere of collective worship in church and the significance of Christian festivals.

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

Staff and Governors have an excellent understanding of their school and the wider community – this is demonstrated through a clear vision based on a strong set of Christian values, which permeates across the whole school life. Furthermore the prospectus, policies, website and other documentation promote the school as a church school and are underpinned by a mission statement which is based on Christian values.

Governors are effective in monitoring the distinctive Christian character of the school and are eager for new governors to undertake further training. The head, senior teacher and Governors are keen to develop further the evaluation of the impact of collective worship. The school council and sports focus group are involved in decision-making and take their role seriously. As a result, pupils are able to voice their desires and concerns. The school is highly regarded in the community. It actively reaches out into the community through the luncheon club and involvement at the Nursing home. Parents speak positively about the links between Church and School and the Christian ethos.

SIAS report March 2011 Milton Ernest VC Lower School, Milton Ernest, Beds MK44 1RF