

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Nash Mills Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Belswains Lane
Nash Mills
Hemel Hempstead
HP3 9XB

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire
Date of inspection: 06 May 2011
Date of last inspection: 16 January 2008
School's unique reference number: 117418
Headteacher: Rosemary Washford-Mower
Inspector's name and number: Bob Hopcraft (484)

School context

Nash Mills is an average sized Voluntary Aided primary school set on the edge of the large town of Hemel Hempstead. It benefits from well-equipped grounds and a mixture of modern and traditional buildings. The large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average, as is the proportion eligible for free school meals.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Nash Mills CofE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Nash Mills is a good church school with many strengths. A strong Christian ethos, robustly promoted by the headteacher, staff and governors, lies at the heart of its work. The development in the quality and effectiveness of Religious Education since the last inspection is particularly notable.

Established strengths

- The central role played by the headteacher, staff and governors in promoting the very positive Christian ethos which lies at the heart of the daily life of the school;
- The strong family feel, reflected in relationships which are outstanding at all levels;
- Good quality acts of worship which promote pupils' spiritual development very effectively;
- Good provision for Religious Education, which has resulted from the school's focus on this aspect of its work since the last inspection.

Focus for development

- Promote the strategic development of the school *as a Church school* by:
 - Enabling governors and other stakeholders to become more closely involved in self-evaluation;
 - Developing a strategic plan to address areas for development identified through self-evaluation.
- Embed the assessment of Religious Education in the school's practice by:
 - Developing opportunities for moderation to secure judgements and identify next steps in learning;
 - Developing the use of "*I can...*" statements to engage pupils in a deeper understanding of their own next steps in learning.

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

This is because all stakeholders are clear that Christian values lie at the heart of the school's work and have a significant impact on the lives of all. This was summed up by one parent who wrote: "*The school also cares for the parents and families as a whole unit, not just the children during the school day... We love Nash Mills School!!*" As a result, pupils are motivated, have a very positive self-image and are proud of their school; as one year 6 pupil put it: "*Our school is very connected, everyone is invited... the door is always open...*" Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with particularly strong opportunities for spiritual development. The use of the prayer board is a good example of this and such activities as the *JIGSAW* group and the *Eco* group enable these opportunities to be extended beyond the normal school day. The strong Christian ethos enables pupils to develop effectively as citizens and opportunities for older pupils to become "buddies" with their younger counterparts enable them to develop responsibility. The effective school council offers opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills. Relationships are outstanding at all levels and the strong commitment to care, guidance and support engenders a palpable family atmosphere. Pupils know and understand the behaviour policy and appreciate that it is founded on the Christian principles of love and forgiveness. They appreciate the opportunity it affords to reflect on wrongdoing and the impact this may have on the lives of others. The bright school environment supports learning very effectively and many examples of thought-provoking displays were observed during the inspection.

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

Learners enjoy worship and talk about it animatedly. In the good act of worship observed during the visit, pupils of all ages were engaged and responded with interest and enthusiasm. There are many opportunities for pupils to take an active role during worship and the establishment of the *Assembly Group* has enabled pupils to plan and deliver their own acts of worship. Worship is inclusive, enabling all members of the school community, including staff, to enjoy this special time together. Themes are well planned and are designed to be reflected upon throughout the school day; this is because themes are based on key Christian values which have a genuine meaning for pupils in their daily lives. Anglican practice is evident during worship through the use of song, traditional prayers and responses. In addition, the school has a well developed prayer life beyond worship, as reflected in the established use of *prayer walls* and other opportunities for children to write their own prayers. Since the last inspection, good records of worship have been kept. While there are now more examples of formal evaluation of the quality of worship, there remains a need to ensure that the impact of worship is evaluated consistently, particularly through talking to and reflecting on the responses of children. The good relationships between the parish and the school noted in the previous report have continued, in spite of the relatively recent pastoral re-organisation into the new benefice of *Langelei*. Clergy continue to play an active part in leading worship and provide good pastoral support to the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

This is because standards are above average, which is reflected in pupils' work. Discussions with pupils show them to have a good knowledge of Christianity and other major world religions. They also have many opportunities to reflect upon the content of lessons and to apply what they have learned to their everyday lives. As a result, pupils make good progress during RE lessons. Consistently good teaching was observed during the inspection, enabling the large majority of pupils to find activities enjoyable, challenging and absorbing. Pupils demonstrate a wide vocabulary with which to discuss feelings and show a great empathy towards those whose views may be different to their own. RE supports spiritual development effectively, with many opportunities for reflection and discussion. As a result, pupils talk confidently and with respect about their own beliefs and those of others. A new RE syllabus has been implemented since the last inspection and this has led to an improvement in provision and in pupils' understanding and development. The recent move towards a more integrated curriculum is set to enhance provision still further. Pupils show a good understanding of cultural diversity and a strong commitment to a global dimension. Key links with schools in other countries and continents provide first-hand understanding of the differences, but also the similarities, of growing up in the modern world. RE benefits from the leadership of a dedicated and enthusiastic co-ordinator and staff who demonstrate good subject knowledge. While assessment is in place in RE, this is not yet embedded in practice. The development of recent initiatives, such as the use of "*I Can...*" statements to engage pupils in an understanding of their own attainment and next steps have not, as yet, had sufficient time to impact on outcomes.

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

This is because school leaders and governors are active in promoting a distinctive Christian ethos. Staff and governors have been actively involved in developing and affirming the school's ethos and therefore have a stake in ensuring that it continues to lie at the heart of its work. Parents are also very supportive of this aspect of the school's work and appreciate the impact it has on the everyday lives of pupils and their families. All major documentation reflects the school's Christian affiliations and both pupils and adults are clear about the values that the school promotes. As a result, no one can be in any doubt that Nash Mills is a church school and the importance of this. While an accurate evaluation of the school *as a Church School* has been completed, governors and other stakeholder groups have not been directly involved in this process and areas identified for development have yet to be translated into a clear strategic plan for the future development of the school, specifically *as a church school*. Recent changes to the governing body have strengthened the commitment to Christian ethos still further and governors are therefore in a strong position to rectify this need in the future. Feedback from a range of stakeholder groups is sought regularly and responses to the inspection questionnaire were almost universally positive, indicating a great pride on behalf of both pupils and parents in their school. The school has very good relationships with the local community and parish and engages in a wide range of activities and events. Pupils initiate and engage in a range of fundraising events and charitable giving.