

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bishop Wood Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Frogmore Street
Tring
Hertfordshire
HP23 3AU

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection:	25 September 2012
Date of last inspection:	5 November 2008
School's unique reference number:	117458
Headteacher:	Mrs Linda Hardman
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

Bishop Wood Junior School serves the town of Tring. Most of its 226 pupils are from a White British background. The school enjoys its close links with the nearby parish church of St Peter and St Paul. The headteacher has built up a strong committed team of staff who ensure that each child is valued as a very precious gift in the eyes of God.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Wood Junior as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Bishop Wood is a welcoming, worshipping and witnessing community, with prayer and Christian love in action an important part of this family school's life. Everyone feels they belong and all are encouraged to achieve. As a result, standards are high. Bishop Wood pupils are given excellent experiences to nurture their Christian journey.

Established strengths

- The strong sense of Christian community, modelled by the headteacher and embraced by everyone.
- The opportunities and experiences given to pupils in collective worship and religious education [RE], nurturing their spiritual development.
- The close links with the church.

Focus for development

- Engage pupils in taking worship outdoors.
- Establish a forum for clergy to dialogue with pupils on the deep questions of faith

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

Bishop Wood sustains an exceptional learning environment where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. Within this inclusive, cohesive family there is a very strong sense of what it means to be living in a Christian community today. Exemplary relationships are nurtured and everyone values the care and respect which underpins all school life. Pupils say they value their teachers and their friends, enjoying their lessons and their learning. Parents speak of 'the one big family where everyone lives by values, putting others before self'. They feel that pupils here 'are given all the tools they need to take the next steps and grow'. Parents feel involved and very much part of the school community. An excellent example is when a much loved member of staff died, and on the day of the funeral everyone was engaged in activities in school to celebrate her life. Pupils enjoy giving to local and national charities, through which they experience the Christian values of service and gratitude. Their global awareness is enriched through Lenten activities for Action Aid as well as fundraising for Concern Worldwide. Bright, prominent displays and interactive prayer corners greatly enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The wildlife garden contributes to pupils' engagement with the natural world.

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

High quality prayerful and meaningful worship is at the heart of this worshipping community, inspiring the school day and permeating all school life and practice. Pupils value leading worship with the rector as well as independently, which staff find 'humbling and inspirational'. As an integral part of the worship committee, pupils meet with the rector and senior teacher fortnightly to plan and review worship, such as including more time in prayers of reflection. In these ways they 'find their own expressions of spirituality'. There is great support from the rector of St Peter and St Paul as well as other clergy in the town who are welcome and regular visitors to school. Pupils enjoy the rich variety of worship and enjoy worshipping together in a setting which enables them to encounter Jesus Christ. They are able to reflect on Jesus' teaching in the Bible and say, 'don't judge people by the way they look'. As a result, spiritual affirmation is very good. Prayer is very much a part of school life and pupils welcome the opportunity to write more of their own prayers. Major Christian festivals in the church year, such as Ash Wednesday, are celebrated in church and school. Pupils have a strong sense of being part of The Anglican Communion with Her Majesty The Queen as its head. Pupils already have a voice in evaluating collective worship. Pupils welcome the opportunity to lead worship outdoors in the school grounds.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons, 'talking about God and how they should live and believe', which greatly helps them understand their own spiritual journey. RE has a high profile in this school and is passionately led by the senior teacher. Teaching and learning are good and standards are often higher than in other core subjects. Pupils are clear about what mosque life means for Muslims and church life for Christians and welcome meeting people of faith. The staff team have embarked on a systematic method of assessment and tracking which informs planning and demonstrates achievement. Next steps include a focus on meaning and purpose. Marking is purposeful, encouraging reflective practice in pupils so they know 'what we really need to improve'. Excellent relationships ensure pupils collaborate well, think independently and show respect to teachers and each other. In lessons pupils are challenged and encouraged to think deeply. For example, Year 3 pupils are able to reflect on Christian symbolism and Year 6 pupils on inspirational qualities of character. Pupils reflect on the life of St Peter and St Paul as well as Bishop Wood, their founder. Many pupils show a good level of theological literacy and can readily articulate Christian concepts such as forgiveness and Trinity. A number of pupils show very high levels of achievement. To this end, the school welcomes establishing a forum where pupils and clergy can ponder and engage together on the deep questions of faith and life.

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

Bishop Wood's distinctive Christian vision is clearly evident and effectively promoted by the headteacher, and embraced by clergy, governors, staff, parents and pupils so that the school's Church of England foundation is articulated and celebrated. It is very evident that an excellent partnership exists with the church, school and diocese working closely together, which enables the school to go from strength to strength. Pupils researched and wrote guides for the parish church in partnership with the local heritage trust. The school features in 'Comment', the Tring churches magazine, and pupils' work has been displayed in church. Exemplary relationships show the key role that Christian values play in the life of the school. Parents interviewed praised the staff for helping their children through their school life. Parents speak of how the headteacher is 'really accessible' and how their children are given the opportunities they need and are supported in their learning. An excellent example is the great importance Bishop Wood places on transition work in welcoming the new Year 3 pupils and their parents. Foundation governors are active in their support for the school, especially through the teaching and learning committee. They ensure areas from the previous inspection have been addressed. Identifying clear areas for future development, they are both challenging and supportive of this school, which shines as a beacon in the area it serves.

SIAS report Sept 2012 Bishop Wood Junior Voluntary Aided Junior School, Tring, HP23 3AU