

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Weston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Maiden Road
Weston
Hitchin
SG4 7AG

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire
Date of inspection: 23 October 2012
Date of last inspection: 6/7 December 2007
School's unique reference number: 117413
Headteacher: Miss Elspeth Shaw
Inspector's name and number: Ms Chris Westgarth 44

School context

Weston Primary is a small and oversubscribed village Church of England Controlled School. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of learners with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is 20%. The school has a number of awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the ICT mark and Sportsactive.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Weston as a Church of England school are good.

Weston is a good church school, which is valued by everyone. It is an inclusive school, where all are welcomed and included. Staff have the highest regard for one another and for the pupils in their care and this has a strong impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils receive a good education underpinned by the Christian values of care, love, forgiveness and compassion.

Established strengths

- The welcoming ethos of the school that creates a sense of belonging for everyone
- The excellent relationships that promote respect throughout the school community

Focus for development

- Continue to develop the distinctive Christian character of the school by further training for Governors and staff
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Collective Worship are effectively undertaken and shared
- Increase the use of interactive and creative opportunities in Collective Worship and monitor its effectiveness

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

Each morning the Head and senior staff meet and greet pupils by name. All feel they belong, this demonstrates the care, love and respect that underpin the ethos of this school. Inclusion is a key value at Weston School, as one member of staff commented *'Weston School is like a family'*. The school benefits from the experience and expertise of the Inclusion manager and it is clear that here is a place where individuals matter, all are unique beings, exemplary relationships are fostered and nurtured and everyone feels valued and listened to. There is indeed a strong family feel within the school, with older pupils happily supporting younger ones and all staff are excellent role models for the children. This results in new pupils quickly becoming established in the school and pupils helping each other when there is a need. Positive behaviour strategies are used proactively and as a result behaviour observed was exceptional and learners were polite and showed respect. Bright and interactive displays are effectively used to make links between Christian values, everyday life and areas of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy caring for their school and grounds. Community cohesion is strong. Locally this is enhanced by the school's involvement at the community singing events and activities. Charitable giving is strong both locally and internationally with pupils keen to help those in need. The school grounds are delightful and enhance the learning environment. As one pupil said *'We love our playground, we can play music we can play football, we can sit quietly, there's something here for everyone'*. Christian values are clearly embedded in the daily routines of the school. The impact of these values on the lives and routines of the school is reflected in the ability of pupils to make good links between the values and the teaching of Jesus. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) provision is strong and opportunities are used well to enhance the learning experience for all pupils. Church members are active in the school and currently involved in the needlework group which is working on the church kneeler project. With no incumbent in post the church is looking at strengthening the involvement of volunteers during the school day.

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

Collective Worship is central to the school day and valued by pupils and staff alike. The school links the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) and Diocesan themes and these are well coordinated by the deputy headteacher. The themes are clearly planned and monitored. Recently a year 5 pupil has begun to write a Collective Worship report but this is yet to be fully embedded. Older pupils are involved in setting the hall up ready for worship and for operating the music system. They perform these tasks with great confidence and calmness. Children enter and exit the hall quietly and with respect. Pupils speak enthusiastically about Dr Gunn's (Foundation Governor) worship times and their worship in the church. There are good levels of participation and most pupils speak positively about worship; however, some would like to be more involved with drama and other creative aspects of worship. Pupils talk with growing confidence about Bible stories and know right from wrong and are able to explain the meaning of forgiveness. Although there is no incumbent at present, members of the church are actively involved in the life of the school and the church building is regularly used for special services and visits.

Children in the Early Years class say a prayer before their snack. Older children are familiar with the Lord's prayer and are beginning to write their own prayers. Since the last inspection the focus on reflection has been enhanced and pupils see prayer as important. However, they are confused about the difference between prayer and reflection. Further opportunities for pupil prayers and space for quiet prayer will further enhance the worshipping experience and highlight the importance of prayer. Plans by the headteacher to introduce a focal point for each worship time will continue to strengthen these times of worship.

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

The prospectus, policies, website and other documentation promote the school as a church school and are underpinned by new school aims which are based on Christian values. The collaborative creation of the statement of aims ensures that the Christian values permeate across the whole school life. Furthermore staff and governors have an excellent understanding of their school and the wider community. Both the head and the deputy are relatively new in post (Sept 2011) and are playing a pivotal role in moving the school forward. The headteacher knows the school well and is aware of the strengths and weaknesses, therefore, self evaluation is strong. The headteacher meets regularly with two other heads of church schools and this is having a positive effect. Governors are effective in monitoring the school as a church school. They are supportive and are beginning to strengthen the role of 'critical friend'. Changes to the governing body and staff show that now is an appropriate time for further training in the distinctive Christian character. The school council are involved in decision-making and take their role very seriously. As a result, pupils are able to voice their desires and concerns. The school is highly regarded in the community, with parents, staff and Governors speaking positively about the links between Church and School and the Christian ethos.

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