

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Leatherhead Trinity Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Woodville Road
Leatherhead
KT22 7BP

Diocese of Guildford

Local authority: Surrey
Date of inspection: 11 November 2010
Date of last inspection: October 2007
School's unique reference number: 135009
Headteacher: Mrs A Walsh
Inspector: Dr G Willoughby (NSI 637)

School context

Leatherhead Trinity is a larger than average ecumenical, voluntary controlled primary school with links to the Church of England, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church. It is a new-build opened in September 2009. Governors also manage the Children's Centre located nearby. The school incorporates a unit providing support for children with speech and language difficulties. Children come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, and the majority are of white British heritage. The number of children with special educational needs is much higher than the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Leatherhead Trinity (Controlled) School as a Church of England school are good.

The school has a positive and distinctive Christian character that flows from the vision of its leaders and the ecumenical partnership with the local churches. Modelling inclusivity and service to the community, Christian values permeate throughout the school and are making a significant impact on the pupils. Involvement in a range of community activities enables the pupils to realise for themselves the effectiveness of the Christian values, with a resulting positive impact on relationships, self-esteem and motivation.

Established strengths

- The vision and commitment of the senior staff and governors to develop the Christian distinctiveness.
- The strong Christian ethos that has a significant impact on the personal development of all the children.
- The continually developing ecumenical partnership with the local churches and community.

Focus for development

- Review the provision for spiritual development in order to explore and develop its links with all areas of school life.
- Increase governor involvement in recording, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the school's Christian character.
- Develop a formal monitoring programme for collective worship involving pupils and governors.

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

The school has a clear set of values that can be seen underpinning the life of the school. In the words of the chair of governors: 'Christian values permeate everything'. The children are very clear in their understanding of how the values of the school impact upon their achievement and behaviour.

The ecumenical partnership with three local churches is having a major impact upon the children and their understanding of the opportunities and issues locally and also globally. With the insightful guidance of staff and ministers, the children develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills (SMSC) from within a highly inclusive Christian community that models unity and compassion. By attending a school that is at the centre of a vibrant church community, the children are increasingly involved and engaged in a range of charitable and support activities. For example, a close link with a school in Uganda involves exchange of letters and, as one pupil says, 'makes us feel happy and grateful for what we have got'.

Moral development is very good. The children recognise the way in which Christian values impact upon the positive relationships within the school and describe the caring culture. They also appreciate the supportive manner with which any issues that arise are resolved by the staff. The school ensures that children, parents and staff of all faiths or none are always made to feel welcome and valued for their contribution to the life of the school.

Spiritual development is also very good and is enhanced as a result of a number of features that include wooded and gardening areas in the school grounds and a dedicated quiet area located inside the school. Cross-curricular and interactive displays based on festivals and themes such as fire and water allow the children space to reflect and challenge their thinking.

Good teaching in religious education creates the environment in which the children come to realise for themselves the Christian character of the school as they, in the words of a governor, 'learn in a Christian context'. A purposeful classroom climate engages the children who then make good progress as a result of careful and creative lesson planning. All pupils, particularly those with educational needs, are made to feel valued and supported and this reflects the high level of care shown by the staff.

The relating of the learning to a wider frame of reference allows the children to develop a good knowledge of the Christian faith as well as an understanding of different faiths and practice.

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

Worship plays a central part in the life of the school and in the development of its Christian character. The children speak of their enjoyment of the variety of forms of worship and particularly those involving the Church ministers. They also appreciate the occasions when they are invited to take an active part, as in the dramatised assemblies.

Collective worship is referred to as assembly and the thorough and creative programme enables the children to explore a range of Christian values while developing their understanding of the traditions and practice of the ecumenical church partnership. The assembly programme has a strong focus on themed and dramatised Bible stories in the style of the 'Open the Book' initiative, with the resulting and effective link with religious education. In the act of worship observed pupils were clearly engaged during an effective dramatisation of the story of how the disciples Peter and John healed a beggar who could not walk, on the steps of the temple. Behaviour was very good and they were eager to participate with the staff who were also taking part. They responded positively to the singing and the prayers within the time for reflection. All staff attend worship and this sends an important message to the children about the importance of worship in the life of the school.

The Christian values covered in the worship programme have an impact on the children who reflect on the meaning for their own lives. A group of children explained how the Harvest celebration led by the ministers of the partner churches had taught them to be grateful for having enough food to eat, unlike children in some parts of the world who are starving. The children effectively develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills as they are challenged to consider their personal response to the questions that arise from the worship. As one pupil said: 'Assembly helps you to be better as a person and time to think about what sort of person you want to be'.

Each term the churches hold a service for the school community and there is also a family service at one of the churches.

Worship is monitored by governors and staff who, as a result of their close involvement, have a clear view of the effectiveness of the programme. However a formal monitoring programme to include gathering the views of the pupils and the impact of worship on their lives is being developed.

The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

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

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has a clear Christian vision for the school and has actively promoted the Christian values that lie at the heart of the school's developing success. Together with governors and the ministers of the partner churches, a shared vision of distinctive values based upon inclusivity and learning in a Christian context, permeates the life of the school.

The headteacher and governors have ensured that all the issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed. The school's self-evaluation portrays an accurate picture of its strengths. Governors monitor the Christian distinctiveness of the school through a range of procedures. However, the school recognises that the effectiveness of the evaluation could be further enhanced by developing a more formal programme involving governors to record, monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's Christian character.

The recently appointed, highly committed religious education co-ordinator leads the subject well, and has a clear vision of the areas where the school can further improve its provision.

Strong emphasis is placed upon the entitlement for all staff and governors to benefit from continuing professional development. As a part of this culture of continual development, staff plan to review the provision for spiritual development throughout the school in order to enhance the spiritual growth of the children as well as themselves.

The close partnership between the school, the three churches and the community is a real strength for the school and testimony to the unstinting commitment of the ministers and governors. The rector said he gains a real sense of achievement from 'being in partnership with staff who value what we offer'. The appointment of a family and children's worker is enabling the continual development of the links through projects for the whole family such as 'messy church'. The impact of this mutual support that exists between the school and the churches promotes a very positive and distinctive environment within which each family, and therefore each child, can have the opportunity to thrive. Successfully achieving the International School's Award demonstrates the commitment of the school to instill a global dimension into the Christian learning experience of all the children.

Parents say they regard the school as a Christian community and that they value the way the staff 'nurture and care' for the children. They speak positively about the school as a church school and recognise the value of the strong links with the churches, seeing the school as part of the wider community.