



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Oakridge Parochial School

Oakridge Lynch, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL6 7NR

Diocese of Gloucester

Gloucestershire LA

Date of inspection: 8th September 2009

Date of last inspection: 25th November 2005

School's URN: 115674

Name of Headteacher: Mrs Lisa Austin Harrison

Inspector: Mrs Daphne Spitzer NS 37

Context

Oakridge Church School is a very small school serving the small, secluded, village of Oakridge Lynch and its immediate locality. It has 40 children on roll. The vast majority of children are of white British heritage. The school buildings have been well maintained with recent improvements made to the entrance lobby and toilets. There is no playground and the children use the village green opposite the school and share the village hall facilities.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Oakridge Parochial Church as a church school are good

The headteacher, staff and governing body are very effective in promoting the warm, Christian ethos of this very small school. The partnership between the school, parents, church and local community is very strong. The warm inclusive culture creates a special Christian "family feel" which children in particular recognise and value.

Established strengths

- The headteacher and governors' enthusiasm for the development of the distinctive Christian character of the school
- Very strong parish, village and school partnership
- Warm, Christian ethos which is fully inclusive and has an impact on the whole community

Focus for development

- Raise attainment in RE by reviewing current scheme of work to better meet needs of all the children.
- Explore and develop an area of the school explicitly for quiet reflection
- Reconsider the way in which the school promotes its distinctive Christian character by means of its new website and school logo
- Develop a sustainable link with an urban school community to improve the children's understanding of the rich diversity of life in twenty first century UK

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

The school's calm, positive Christian ethos ensures that all children feel valued and special, enjoy school and have many opportunities to achieve their potential. Christian values are reflected in the children's caring and responsible behaviour towards one another. Children recognised that the values promoted by the school were helpful in guiding them through life. This is a fully inclusive school. Children of all ages play well together as seen at playtimes when a young infant footballer is encouraged and welcomed to join in the games led by much older children. A child explained that "no one was left out." All children benefit from having a "buddy," an official special friend allocated by the school to model friendship. Special awards are regularly given in school and in church to recognise achievement and examples of Christian behaviour. Relationships throughout the school are good at all levels. A school bell is a new feature donated by parents of recent leavers to thank the school for their children's "happy memories." The school's Christian ethos very effectively supports spiritual and moral development. Prayer and reflective moments are embedded into the daily life of the school. Grace is said before lunch and a prayer said at the end of the day. The school's core values are integral to the whole curriculum. Strong links are explicitly made between the values promoted and other subjects such as RE and between the "Open the Book" acts of worship. However, although children are aware it is a church school, not all understand that the values being promoted are explicitly Christian. The school's focus on spirituality impacts on the children's behaviour. The commemorative centenary bench on the village green is naturally used by children for quiet moments of reflection. The school buildings are bright and attractive. Displays on the current theme for worship and RE are much in evidence throughout the school and have an impact well on learners. The recent building work has enhanced the school accommodation and offers further opportunities to encourage spiritual development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The daily act of collective worship holds a place of special importance in the life of the school. All staff are present and lead acts of worship. The headteacher is the worship coordinator and has introduced and embedded the diocesan resource "Values for Life" as the structure of the year's plan for worship. Children enjoy this special time of the day, as evidenced by the smiling faces and laughter noticed during the act of worship observed. The current value of peace was being explored well through learning about the life of St Francis of Assisi. Interactive resources were used effectively to enhance learning and ensure that the subject was relevant to the children's experience. A lit candle is used as a focus for worship and this contributes to spiritual growth because it is widely understood to represent the light of Jesus. A time of prayer and reflection is included in each act of worship. The school has adopted its own prayer which is said regularly. The Lords prayer is also known widely. A beautiful metal cross made by the local blacksmith is hung close to the focus table for worship to encourage reflection. Worship is regularly held in the nearby church which effectively promotes spiritual growth and compensates for the "worship" room in school being rather cramped and restricted. At the end of each term a celebration service is held in church to which parents are invited. School worship is enhanced by Sunday family services which include the parish congregation as well as the whole parental body and governors. In this way, children effectively gain understanding of Anglican faith and practice. Christian festivals, such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter are celebrated in this way. Members of the parish, including the vicar visit frequently to lead "Open the Book" services. These are much enjoyed by all present and the parish congregation have also benefitted when they take place during family services. Governors provide a strong presence at these events. Since the last inspection, a link governor regularly monitors collective worship ensuring that the pupils' voice is heard and that acts of worship continue to improve in quality and meet the needs of all present.

The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory

Religious education is given an important role in the life of the Oakridge Parochial school. The headteacher leads the subject and has ensured that it is always a key priority area in the school development plan. Children enjoy learning RE and value the opportunities given in lessons to learn about other faiths represented in the UK as well as Christianity. Their understanding of Christianity is developing well but their knowledge of other faiths, particularly that of Judaism is not as good as would be expected. As yet, there is no programme of visits or visitors to enhance children's understanding of other faiths. Links with an urban inner city school, however have now been initiated. Learning and teaching is good. In lessons observed children's attitudes were very positive due to the interesting and innovative styles of teaching employed. In the key stage 2 class children made good progress in developing their understanding of the Bible. Their response to the teacher's skilled questioning demonstrated their understanding of the school's core Christian values. For instance, one child said that the Bible was like a torch "because it shines like the light of Jesus in the world." RE effectively contributes to the children's spiritual and moral development. Older pupils knew that the value of forgiveness was a theme in many Bible stories. In the foundation and key stage 1 class children were enjoying learning about what makes a good friend. Teaching activities were clearly differentiated and resources were well used to develop empathy. Since the last inspection, the development of a whole school system of record keeping and assessment has been addressed, although as yet it is not as rigorous as in the other core subjects. The school is currently investigating other methods which would more effectively match their particular needs.

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

The headteacher and governors very effectively promote a clear Christian vision which is at the heart of the life of the school. The vision is understood and shared with the whole school community. The development of the school's vision is a key strand of the school's strategic plan. Governors encourage and support all staff in promoting the school's vision. Staff are highly valued, as demonstrated by the times set apart for their own personal well being and spiritual growth. Governors monitor key aspects of the daily life of the school including collective worship and its distinctive Christian character. They regularly attend training provided by the diocese enabling them to challenge the school to improve further. Self evaluation systems are well established and the school has accurately identified areas for development. Parents' views are welcomed and the headteacher is responsive to suggestions given. For instance, the whole school community supported the impromptu school choir at a recent musical event at Gloucester Cathedral, the idea for this event having come from a parent of a child in the County Junior Choir. Parents, however, as yet are not surveyed for their views of the school's progress as a church school in a formal way as part of an annual self evaluation process. The partnership of the school, church and local community is exceptionally strong. Links between the school and church have been strengthened significantly, over the last few years due partly to the presence of the new vicar. The headteacher encourages and facilitates the planning of the Sunday family services in which the school takes part. She has also introduced "Experience Easter" and "Experience Christmas" led by parents and parishioners, set up in the church and now highly valued by the whole community. With the Parish Council's agreement the school is developing part of the village green as a productive garden for the benefit of everyone. "Armed Forces" Day was a recent event, on the village green, to which parishioners were invited. All children are known and cared for by the village as well as the school community. This church school is truly at the heart of the local community.