

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Mary Magdalene CE (C) Primary School

Stanway Road
West Bromwich
B71 1RP

Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Sandwell

Dates of inspection: 10th December 2008

Date of last inspection: 1st February 2006

School's unique reference number: 013989

Headteacher: Mr Jason Willetts

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Rosemary Woodward 583

School context

St Mary Magdalene's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a small inner-city school housed in outdated Victorian buildings. However, its limited facilities are used imaginatively to enhance the school environment. The surrounding community encompasses a wide range of cultural, faith and economic groups. Many of the families in the area face difficult social, emotional and financial challenges.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The leadership of St Mary Magdalene's has a clear vision for a school with Christian values at its heart. They have worked together to create an inclusive environment where there is a genuine care for the individual within a spirit of Christian love. The local community values the school highly and there are good links between school and church. Pupils feel happy and secure and their successes are celebrated.

Established strengths

- The extremely high level of Christian care and support that is lived out within the school community.
- The strong Christian leadership of the headteacher, supported by staff and governors.
- The support for the school by the vicar and local church.

Focus for development

- Implement the planned strategies for more effective planning, monitoring and evaluating of Collective Worship through the contribution of all stakeholders.
- Make the Christian foundation of the school more explicit within written documentation.
- Widen the pupils' understanding of the worldwide Anglican Church.

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

The school makes excellent provision for learners. It is very effective at meeting the needs of all the pupils in a variety of ways ensuring that no matter what their background or ability they are encouraged to reach their potential within a safe and secure environment. From a challenging start, both academically and behaviourally, the school has established a firm foundation for success. The school's ethos is underpinned by Christian values evident in the love, care and respect afforded to all. The school motto – 'Love to learn, learn to love' exemplifies the caring attitudes of the staff. This is recognised by parents, one of whom stated that '*The church teaches about Jesus' love. This school lives it out*'. Another called the school '*A haven of light within the community*'. Questionnaires affirm that almost all parents who responded are aware of school/church links and value them highly, although these links are not always made explicit, particularly in written documentation. Parents speak of the school supporting them in their own times of difficulty with staff going '*Above and*

beyond what could be expected' while others suggested that the school community was like an extended family offering support and care in Jesus' name. Pupils who have transferred from other schools, and their parents, are particularly positive in realising how this school's ethos differs from that of many others. Children of all ethnic and faith backgrounds and abilities benefit from the school's provision, which develops and enhances their learning. A Sikh pupil, for example, had received bereavement counselling from the schools' learning mentor who used common ground between the Christian faith and the pupil's own to inform her work. The school badge does not explicitly celebrate links with the Church of England. However, one boy stated that *'Mary Magdalene's is a great name for this school. Most people didn't like Mary, but Jesus looked after her. That's what this school does for everyone, even people who have problems'*. Inter-active displays around the schools and reflective areas within the classrooms and playground enhance the spiritual development of the pupils.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship takes an important place within the life of the school and is valued by staff and pupils alike. There is clear differentiation between worship and assembly and pupils are challenged to relate Christian teaching to their own lives and to draw relevant inspiration from Bible stories. The school is very sensitive to the traditions and beliefs of those from other faiths or none and ensures that such pupils are able to gain inspiration from the content, as can the many of African and Caribbean Christian background. A prayer net in the entrance encourages pupils of different faiths to say their own prayers. Pupils speak very positively of using this. They are able to discuss the content of worship and are positive about the inspiration they have gained from it. Class worship enables pupils to take an active role, and all teaching staff lead worship sessions and value the chance to do so. Children join enthusiastically in singing, and have some knowledge of festivals and other features of Anglican worship. They are able to share their teaching about the Eucharist, and know the Lord's prayer. Parents actively support worship times at the church, and particularly value the annual carol service in the playground. Pupils value the contribution of the local vicar highly, respecting him while thinking of him as a friend. The school recognises that its aims to improve the planning of worship and establish recording and evaluation by all stakeholders must be given high priority as the next step in their journey, but as yet no monitoring procedures are in place.

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

The school has a strong Christian vision that is clearly articulated by the headteacher, governors and staff. Parents, pupils, staff and governors all speak very highly of the head, who one parent described as 'a very special visionary'. Leading by example, the head has effectively built upon the good work of his predecessor to establish a strong, caring and cohesive community where learning can take place and children achieve within the context of a loving Christian environment. One Christian parent said they were all *'doers of the word, not just hearers'*. Staff are strongly committed to embedding worship at the heart of this community. The whole staff supports each other very well. The vicar believes that the distinctive role of the church is to reach out into the whole community as a beacon of God's love, and sees the school as an integral part of this mission. Headteacher and staff speak highly of the support and encouragement they receive from him, and other foundation governors. The headteacher speaks with enthusiasm of the journey towards becoming fully distinctive and effective as a church school and recognises that worship is an important focus for development. He believes that this must follow now that the school has won the respect and trust of all stakeholders and the local community. Foundation governors, currently not involved in evaluation, are eager to support this development, and to support further ties with the Diocese and the wider church. The school is benefiting from a partnership with an Islamic school that increases understanding of a faith not represented within the school community, and allows pupils to share the school's ethos with others. The school is active in charity work, seeing this as another practical way of demonstrating Christian love and service beyond its own community. Between them, the headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils are striving to create a Christian school of which they can already be justly proud.