

Great Waltham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

South Street
Great Waltham
Essex
CM3 1DF

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex
Dates of inspection: February 24th 2012
Date of last inspection: June 4th 2009
School's unique reference number: 115114
Headteacher: Mrs Diane Wilson
Inspector's name and number: Bronwen Ferland 736

School context

Great Waltham CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a rural school of 148 pupils drawn from Great Waltham itself and the surrounding villages. The school welcomes pupils from a variety of backgrounds, although the majority share a white British heritage. Pupils make good progress and demonstrate high levels of good behaviour.

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

The welcoming ethos of this school as a church school is apparent to all visitors to the school. The impact of its Christian ethos is clearly heard in the evidence of staff, pupils, governors and parents. The school actively fosters an environment in which all pupils are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

Established strengths

- School leaders share a very clear vision of how their Christian values are central to every aspect of the school's life
- Christian values of respect for each and every individual lead to a real sense of caring for each other
- The strong relationship which has been established between the school and the local church

Focus for development

- To establish a system for regularly including pupil evaluation of all forms of worship to enable the governors to monitor this aspect of school life and plan for future development
- To seek further ways to enhance the environment to explicitly demonstrate the Christian character of the school

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

The Christian values of this school are distinctive and acknowledged by all. All stakeholders regard respect for the individual and the need to celebrate differences as important in influencing the everyday life of this school. One pupil stated firmly that, 'If the school didn't have Christian values it would not be such a nice place.' It is easy to see how living by these values has influenced the very good behaviour of the pupils and the excellent relationships observed between all members of the school community. The school forum are keen to describe the way in which staff respond quickly to any problem so that the pupils have confidence that any issue will be speedily and fairly resolved. This is also the opinion of parents. Parents also appreciate the way in which the school calls on the clergy for sensitive pastoral support for individuals or families as needed. Throughout the school, work in Religious Education clearly supports the spiritual, moral, cultural and social education of the pupils. Children support each other in solving playground issues and in ensuring that everyone has someone

to play with. Conversation with the members of the school forum showed a clear sense of responsibility for each other's well-being. A recent invitation by Barnados to the school choir to sing at St Paul's cathedral had clearly offered an experience the children recognised as spiritual, 'a very special place, which was unforgettable'. There is a colourful, eye-catching cross displayed in the entrance hall, but throughout the school there are few other overt signs which show the distinctive Christian character of the school, although staff and governors have recently established an outside area for quiet reflection, which the children were keen to describe.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is very important in the life of the school. All staff acknowledge the value of the daily act of worship by their attendance and all lead worship from time to time. Currently only one pupil is withdrawn from acts of worship. Pupils participate with confidence and are listened to by their peers with respect. They clearly enjoy singing and using instruments. Prayer is seen as important and all pupils have been writing prayers which will become a prayer book resource for the future. It is intended that these prayers will form the basis of a school prayer. Pupils are able to articulate the importance of prayer and its impact on their lives. This impact is demonstrated by a pupil's comment, 'when I pray in school I can be in my own space and world', indicating the spiritual value for her of prayer. Older pupils are responsible for the music and displaying the hymns. Effective planning of worship ensures that the daily act of worship follows a weekly theme selected by the worship co-ordinator. However, there is at present no formal opportunity for pupils to give their views on the different types of worship offered by the school. At the end of each week parents appreciate being invited to a celebration assembly where the achievements of the children both inside and outside of school are acknowledged. Every month there is a community act of worship held in the local church which is attended by parents, governors and members of the local community as well as the school. This is also greatly appreciated by parents. The incumbent and the head teacher have introduced a termly Eucharist for the older pupils which is carefully planned to be age-appropriate and to further develop pupils' knowledge of Anglican practice. The school has strategies in place to ensure that pupils attending church at a later point in their lives will feel at home and comfortable with the worship. Preparation for baptism and confirmation has happened within the school environment, and one child was able to relate how special she had felt when fellow pupils then attended her baptism.

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

The headteacher, senior management team and Governors are as one in their articulation of a very strong and clear vision for the school based on Christian values. The central tenet is one of respect for all, so that loving and caring for each other and celebration of differences flow from this. This vision is also clearly articulated by parents and pupils, and all stakeholders can describe the working out of this vision within the life of the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils and parents see this in the way in which all problems are quickly and compassionately resolved. The mission statement has been reviewed by the governing body and staff since the last inspection. Governors support the school on a regular basis, supporting classes and individuals. They provide strong pastoral leadership for the school and its wider community. The links to the parish church are particularly strong. The school features regularly in the church intercessions and work done by pupils is displayed within the church. The headteacher and incumbent together have introduced a monthly act of community worship in the church which is attended by members of the parish as well as pupils, governors and parents. This has helped pupils feel comfortable in the church environment and drawn members of the local community into closer contact with the school. There is also now a termly school Eucharist which is now valued by all stakeholders. Governors carry out their monitoring role effectively and act as 'critical friends' when reviewing proposals from the headteacher thus addressing an issue arising from the previous inspection.