

The Wickford Church of England School

Mount Road
Wickford
SS11 8HE

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex
Date of inspection: 26 March 2013
Date of last inspection: 27 June 2008
School's unique reference number: 115089
Executive Headteacher: Mrs Debbie Rogan Head of School: Mrs Louise Johnson
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

Wickford Church of England school leads the HEARTS [Happiness, Esteem, Achievement, Respect and Responsibility, Truth, Spirituality] Academy Trust and is linked to Briscoe Primary School and Nursery with an executive headteacher. Currently, there are 134 pupils on roll who are mainly from a White British background. The academy is the recipient of many national awards, one of which is the Inclusion Quality Mark.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Wickford Church of England school are outstanding

This academy has a very strong sense of being a welcoming and worshipping community, with very good links between church and academy. Everyone feels they belong and are encouraged to reflect deeply and achieve highly.

Established strengths

- The positive attitude of these young pupils who reflect deeply on the high quality experiences offered to them in collective worship and Holy Space.
- The strong sense of belonging and community, underpinned by the well embedded commitment to living the HEARTS mission.
- The importance of prayer and reflection in the life of the academy.
- The excellent partnership between church and academy.

Focus for development

- Enhance the evaluation of collective worship, involving pupils and governors.
- Establish a forum for clergy and pupils to discuss together the deep questions of faith and life.

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

Wickford Church of England Academy [WCE] sustains an excellent learning environment where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. Here is a place where exemplary relationships are nurtured and everyone values the care and respect shown which underpins everything. Within this cohesive family, there is a very strong sense of what it means to be living in a community in which church and academy links are extremely important. The academy is very well resourced and the full range of extra curricular activities enriches and ensures the widest range of achievement. Pupils feel able to make a positive contribution, showing great care for younger children. Some pupils aspire to be teachers because of the good role models they have seen. Their sense of global awareness is greatly enhanced through vibrant links with Mukangu School in Kenya with pupils saying, 'we have to look after the Kenyan people'. Pupils grow 'runner beans in our shamba like in Kenya in our gardening club'. Bright, prominent displays as well as quiet areas in school and in the

grounds greatly enhance pupils' spiritual development. Indeed, the school grounds greatly contribute to pupils' engagement with the natural world, living links with Kenya, and especially in the memorial garden to the former well loved incumbent and chair of governors, whose legacy lives on. Pupils say they enjoy Holy Space, within which religious education [RE] is enshrined. Such lessons offer opportunities to engage with Bible stories and explore wondering questions in a Godly Play setting where prayer and reflection is of great importance. The Lord's Prayer, The Christ as a Light prayer and a prayer of forgiveness always takes place at such times. Pupils say the stories they engage with help them to live their lives. Pupils say that belonging to the Christian community of WCE means 'It's of God and we have Holy Space, pray more, and we have church and crosses in school'. They show good knowledge of Christian concepts such as trinity, incarnation and salvation. These young pupils show a good level of religious literacy and welcome the opportunity to discuss the deep questions of life and faith with adults.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship enjoys a special place in this church school where links with the parish church ensures the Anglican tradition is upheld. Worship clearly engages pupils and is making a difference in their lives and the lives of their families. The attitude of pupils to collective worship is excellent because the quality of worship offered to them contributes greatly to their spiritual development. It is well planned and led, fully inclusive of all. Pupils reflect deeply on what they learn in collective worship, saying, 'I like it when people from church come in to tell us the stories of Easter'. They say, 'Easter makes me feel Jesus is with all of us and it makes me feel calm and I won't be afraid as he's always with me'. Pupils are clear that forgiveness is about, 'being best friends again and not enemies anymore'. These young pupils are very comfortable with being in St Catherine's Church as they are regularly there for worship or to engage in spiritually reflective activities. Key festivals in the church year such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated with services in church. Pupils' experience of the wider Anglican communion is enriched by visits to St Paul's Cathedral which pupils spoke of as 'massive' as well as visits to school from the Bishop of Chelmsford. Pupils' thoughts on collective worship already form part of regular feedback to the governing body. Pupils welcome the opportunity for all governors to read their reflections, suggesting that parents would value reading these as well and it would be a little like reading 'Samuel Pepys' diary'. Since the last inspection the profile of worship is being raised through pupils being more involved in planning and leading worship in school and in church. An excellent example of this was the Easter service in church. Using candles and the pupils' own choice of visual images is a good example of how the focus in worship has been enhanced.

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

The academy's Christian foundation is clearly evident and very effectively promoted by the hard work and dedication of the executive headteacher and head of school, supported by the whole school community. Everyone models the academy vision and the Christian values which are at its heart. Indeed, the academy is much loved by its pupils and much appreciated by its parent body. There is a real sense of belonging, identity and involvement from everybody. Foundation governors are actively involved and open to new ways of helping the academy move forward. This includes a focus for governors on succession planning with new staff and governors now in post. Governors appoint effective staff who are provided with leadership opportunities. Parents speak highly of the headteachers and their approachability and kindness. They also praise all the staff, including the office staff who 'work well as a team and whose co-operation with the parents is wonderful'. Pupils have an important voice and their views are listened to and acted upon. Staff affirm that, 'the children's responses are the best critique'. For example, Y2 pupils state it is their job to welcome everyone to worship. The academy has featured in the parish magazine and pupils' work has been displayed in church. The HEARTS Academy Trust is committed to supporting and sponsoring other schools, stemming from WCE's outstanding position as a National Support School. The academy values support from the diocese. This ensures WCE's academy foundation is upheld and is celebrated by everyone. This welcoming, worshipping and witnessing community lives out its mission in the community it serves.

