

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Ewelme Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School**

**Burrows Hill**

**Ewelme**

**Oxfordshire**

**OX10 6HU**

**Diocese:** Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 21 November 2012

Date of last inspection: 19 November 2007

School's unique reference number: 123197

Headteacher: Margery Slatter

Inspector's name and number: Ian Lewis 629

#### **School context**

Ewelme is a small primary school housed in a unique, mainly fifteenth century grade 1 listed building which, in turn, is physically joined to a complex of other medieval buildings consisting of occupied almshouses and the parish church, situated in the centre of the village. The whole school community is justifiably proud of its heritage. The school enjoys an excellent partnership with the parish church and its clergy and enjoys very close links with the local community. It is also situated close to the RAF base at Benson from which it receives approximately 25% of its children.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ewelme as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Strong and clear-sighted leadership by the head teacher working in very close partnership with the governors and staff has ensured that a vibrant Christian ethos is at the heart of life at the school. The values underlying the vision are clearly evident throughout the school being known, understood and demonstrated by all in its community creating an atmosphere in which its children thrive spiritually, educationally and socially.

#### **Established strengths**

- A clear vision for the school, based on strong Christian values, which drives its development.
- Strong and inspirational leadership by the head teacher supported by extremely dedicated governors and staff.
- A strong and unique Christian heritage which is valued by all in its community.
- Exceptionally strong links with the local community, the parish church and its clergy.

#### **Focus for development**

- Establish a formal, recorded system for the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.
- Continue to develop marking strategies to include the use of probing questions which further challenge the pupils' thinking.

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

The entire life of Ewelme Primary School is based securely on very strong Christian values by which all in its community live and work. The school's ethos of care and love for all is clearly visible both in the exemplary behaviour of its children and in the way all in its community interact with each other and the world around them. Parents very enthusiastically say, "The atmosphere inside the school is exceptional", both they and the children describing the community as "a big extended family". Parents in particular state how the children look after each other saying, "They care for and learn from each other". Parents go on to say how the values "are visible through all school life". The children feel safe and well cared for, one comment being "I feel safe because I know everybody. They are cheerful and helpful and I can be the same back" and another: "All the staff make me feel safe. You know they're watching over you!" The children have a strong voice within the school, making contributions to management issues through the very active school council. They say they know they are valued and that staff and governors listen to them. The spiritual development of the pupils is extremely well supported through good opportunities for prayer and reflective thought throughout the day. They are developing a good understanding of the nature of prayer saying, "When I pray I think about forgiving people and starting afresh" and "It's speaking to God so that He can help". There are excellent examples of prayers written by the children displayed around the school. The exceptional and unique environment in which the children learn is a major support to their spiritual development, parents describing with deep feeling how the medieval buildings create a sense of awe and wonder which does not lessen with familiarity; a view echoed keenly by the children themselves. The school has developed a close and beneficial relationship with the local community, particularly with the parish church and its clergy. Through this the children are developing a very strong sense of respect and a growing understanding of their responsibility towards the wider community. A clear example of this is in the making of a wreath for Remembrance Day which pupils then lay during the village's act of remembrance. Their responsibilities as members of the global community are effectively developed through the school's active partnership with schools in Uganda and France.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is of major importance in the life of the school as it strongly affirms and strengthens its Christian values. All within the school's community feel included regardless of faith or denomination, if any. The children clearly enjoy worship saying, "I love the hymns and songs" and "I really like the way the stories are linked to our values". This enjoyment was evidenced in the act of worship observed involving the Key Stage 2 children. They eagerly took part in drama, answered questions and joined in discussion. Their singing was a pleasure to hear. Throughout the act of worship there was a distinct air of reverence, particularly during the prayers and time of quiet reflection. Pupils are given good opportunities to take an active part in collective worship and also to devise and lead at significant and appropriate times. Worship is meticulously planned in the long and short term using a variety of sources. This process is led by the head teacher in her role as co-ordinator for worship working closely with staff and the priest-in-charge of the parish. Monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision in collective worship together with its impact on the school community is carried out regularly through informal observation and discussion with the participants. Formal, recorded evaluations are, however, insufficient. Worship is discussed by governors, evidenced in the minutes of meetings and through discussion with foundation governors. It occupies a firm place within the school's development plan through its RE and collective worship action plan. School worship is very regularly held in the parish church which adds a significant spiritual dimension due to the strong sense of history within the building. A typical comment made by the children is "When you're listening you can look at the (medieval) stained glass windows and it's so peaceful". The school community visits the church regularly for both worship and curriculum purposes and this, together with the active involvement of the priest-in-charge within the school, is enabling the children to gain a good understanding of Anglican tradition and practice.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Religious education occupies an extremely important place within the school's curriculum, being taught both as a discrete and as a cross-curricular subject when appropriate. It is thoroughly and extensively planned, drawing principally on the Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus as a basis. Detailed schemes of work devised by the school give excellent support to individual teachers' planning. The children show real enthusiasm when discussing RE and say how much they enjoy the subject, particularly when links are made with other areas of learning. Discussion gives evidence that they are developing a good understanding of the importance and relevance of faith in the world. Pupils say that they enjoy learning about the major faiths, evidence in discussion showing that they are developing a good understanding of the similarities and differences. "It's really interesting to see the links between religions" is a typical comment by the children. Their enthusiasm was evident in the two good lessons observed, one in each Key Stage. In both, the children were totally absorbed and involved. Good questioning probed their thinking and very effective use was made of peer discussion both in groups and in pairs. Pupils gauge their own learning through knowing the learning objectives of every lesson. The subject is rigorously monitored and evaluated by the head teacher and foundation governors. The results of evaluation are discussed by both staff and governors and subsequently inform planning. Pupils' individual attainment and progress is meticulously tracked and recorded and is compared with that in the other core subjects giving clear evidence that attainment and progress in RE is at least in line with them. The children's written work is thoroughly marked with good comments in evidence but there is, however, insufficient use of questions within marking to challenge their thinking still further.

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

Strong and effective leadership by the head teacher working in close partnership with a highly dedicated team of governors and staff has enabled the creation of a clear vision for the school based on firm Christian values, in particular those of love and respect for all. These values are known and practised by all in the school community, the adults being excellent exemplars. Parents say, "The values are seen all through the school and particularly 'love your neighbour'". Pupils reflect the school's ethos through their exemplary behaviour. All stakeholders are closely involved in the regular review and, when deemed necessary, revision of the school's vision and values. The children are very actively involved in matters of school management through the school council. The governing body regularly reviews and discusses the ongoing development of the school's distinctiveness as a church school. This subsequently informs the overall development plan. Great importance is placed on the personal, professional and spiritual development of staff and governors, this being closely linked to succession planning as a church school. Strong and vibrant links have been forged with the local community, particularly with the parish church with which it has a firm partnership. The priest-in-charge is extremely active in supporting the school's RE and worship and also, as a governor, in ensuring the ongoing development of the school's Anglican character. The school regularly worships in the church and displays of the children's work are in evidence within its buildings. The school takes an active and valued part in local events such as Remembrance Day, when the children make a wreath and place it with others from the local community. In another example, the children enjoy singing carols at the community-run village shop near Christmas. The school has also made valuable links with the worldwide community through its partnership with schools in Uganda and France.