

Cherry Hinton Church of England VC Infant School

High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB1 9HH

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

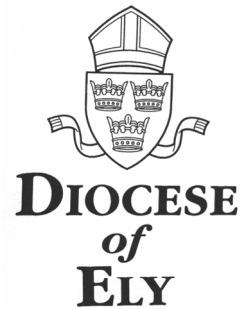
Dates of inspection: 6 May 2008

Date of last inspection: 22, 28 and 30 June 2004

School's unique reference number: 110801

Headteacher: Mrs Alison Beardon

Inspector's name and number: John Rudge



School context

The school, with 174 children aged 3 to 7, is located on the eastern outskirts of Cambridge. Although most children are white British, a significant number are from a wide range of minority ethnic families, especially in the nursery. A higher than average proportion of all children have additional learning needs. Attainment on entry is below average. An acting headteacher is currently leading the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cherry Hinton Infant School as a Church of England school are good

This is a good school because the education and welfare of all the children are supported by caring staff and because the ethos of the school is founded on explicit Christian values. These values are evident in the life of the school at all levels. Parents and governors also support the school well. The children are well aware of the school's clear Christian identity and enjoy their learning in a safe and secure environment.

Established strengths

- The underlying high quality of provision for all children is supported by a strong Christian ethos
- Behaviour policy is underpinned and maintained through explicit Christian values
- Collective worship has a clear Christian focus using a variety of approaches and a range of media to ensure interest and participation

Focus for development

- Involving foundation governors in monitoring and evaluating collective worship
- Continuing to develop the school's vision for the future.

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

The clear Christian ethos of the school underlies all its activities, and is recognised and celebrated by staff and children without being overstated. Children enjoy learning in its lively and secure environment and feel valued and safe. They are able to talk about the various ways in which Christian faith informs their daily activities and to explain, at a simple level, why for example they help to collect money for people in need. The school's behaviour policy is based on clearly stated Christian values. These are re-enforced in the way children are expected to behave towards one another and towards their teachers. There is a mutual expectation of respect and care in all relationships and forgiveness and reconciliation provide the basis for dealing with lapses in behaviour.

The school's environment gives clear expression to its Christian foundation, and to its links with the parish church. This is seen, for example, in the half-termly display in the school entrance, highlighting the theme for assembly, in the way children talk about and explain their

school badge and in the science display which includes a simple quotation from the Bible about the wonder and beauty of the natural world. At the same time, the needs and aspirations of children from non-Christian families are discussed thoroughly with parents and catered for in the inclusive and supportive ethos of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship plays a key role in the daily life of the school. It is used as an opportunity for focusing the various activities of the school around key themes which are thoroughly prepared and interestingly presented. It is also used to highlight and celebrate the Christian values of the school and to recognise children's achievements both in their learning and in their behaviour.

Children play a central role in the planning and presentation of collective worship. They are involved, for example, in leading the saying of the Lord's Prayer, in the lighting of a candle, in singing and in acting out stories. The learning of a verse from the Bible helps to familiarise children with key texts. Sound, visual display of Christian symbols and calm and respectful actions all combine to give the occasion a sense of importance and to give expression to the Anglican ethos of the school. Children show a good understanding of the various activities and can explain, for example, what the candle symbolises and why the candle is lit each day. All teachers are encouraged to play an active role in collective worship. They take it in turns to lead collective worship and new teachers are carefully supported in fulfilling this role. The whole activity manages to combine a sense of reverence within an atmosphere of enjoyment. Other opportunities for quiet and reflection are encouraged in the daily life of the school. For example, one class observes a time for prayer just before the lunchtime break.

Visitors, especially local clergy and ministers, are regularly involved in collective worship and the parish priest is a familiar and popular figure in the school. Visits to the parish church for special occasions and sometimes for lessons help to express the mutual support of church and school.

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

The tone of the school is very well set by the acting headteacher with the close co-operation and involvement of the whole staff. The sense of shared leadership is an important part of the school's ethos and atmosphere and ensures that the distinctive Christian vision is upheld and celebrated. New teachers are made fully aware, at interview, of the school's Christian foundation and ethos and encouraged to play a full part in promoting its ethos.

Collective worship is well managed and thoroughly prepared, and reviewed on a regular basis by the staff. However, the school recognises that foundation governors could play a more active and effective role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of collective worship and the impact of the school's vision on children's learning and wellbeing. Parents are encouraged to play a full and active part in the life of the school. A parents' prayer group gives support and encouragement in maintaining the school's Christian ethos.

Links with local churches, and especially the parish church, provide another source of community support for the school. The diocese also has an effective link with the school through the Bishop's visitor and through occasional training sessions with staff on practical ways to develop the school's ethos.

The school's self evaluation gives an accurate account of its achievements and sets appropriately focussed targets. A positive and effective response has been made to issues raised in the previous report and the school is looking to the future. A vision group is considering how the school can develop further in the quality of both the education it offers all its children and in the Christian atmosphere and environment of learning. In particular, it is considering how the needs of an increasing number of children from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including diversity within the Christian community, can be more fully met.

All stakeholders are well motivated and this school has strong potential to become outstanding.