

INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 23 OF THE 1996 EDUCATION ACT

DIOCESE OF OXFORD

HAWRIDGE AND CHOLESBURY CE COMBINED SCHOOL

Hawridge
Chesham
Buckinghamshire
HP5 2UQ

Headteacher: Mr J. L. Chudley

Chairman of Governors: Mr A. Brown

Date of Inspection: September 28th to October 1st 1998

Section 23 Inspector: Gillian Allison

1 INTRODUCTION

The Section 23 Inspection in this controlled school was concerned with the collective worship and the links between the worship and the whole life of the school, with reference to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of its curriculum. The inspection took place at the same time as the Section 10 Inspection, with the full cooperation of the OFSTED team.

The Inspector would like to thank the school for the warm welcome and help she received.

Cholesbury and Hawridge School is a village school in a beautiful, rural part of the Chilterns. The original school building is still in use as a classroom for the youngest children but the main part of the school consists of a 1970's building, planned to be much larger, which leaves the school somewhat cramped for space and facilities. The school is popular, regularly oversubscribed, with many pupils from the surrounding villages and beyond.

The school was inspected under Section 13 of the 1988 Education Act in May 1995. There have been some changes to the school since the last inspection. Following county reorganisation, from September 1998 the age of transfer has been changed from 12 years to 11 years. One classroom has been set up as a science and IT room. Two members of staff have retired and one is on maternity leave. There was an additional member of staff on a fixed term contract during 1997/98.

At the time of the inspection there were 153 pupils in the school, taught in 5 classes by 5 full-time and 1 part-time teachers, assisted by 9 support staff.

2 EVIDENCE

Documents including ;

- the school prospectus
- the mission statement
- the school aims
- the collective worship policy
- the planning for collective worship
- collective worship programmes, past and present
- the religious education policy
- the PSHE policy
- the school development plan
- behaviour policy
- equal opportunities policy
- multicultural policy
- a copy of the last Section 13 Inspection report and the action plan
- the staff handbook

Three acts of collective worship and one circle time were observed.

Pupils were observed during registration, class-time, at break and lunchtime.

Discussions were held with pupils.

Interviews were held with the Headteacher, The Vicar, the Chairman of Governors, foundation governors and parents.

3 COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

3.1 The school's policy on collective worship, which has been in place since 1994, is consistent with the Mission Statement, though there is no mention of the distinctive nature of worship provision in the voluntary controlled school. Nonetheless, the worship promotes aims which are entirely in keeping with the Christian foundation of the school.

The school meets the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship and notifies parents of their right to withdraw their child. There have been no withdrawals for the last three years. Wording in the prospectus about collective worship provision could be made clearer.

3.2 Themes for the year are planned by the Headteacher, in consultation with staff, pupils, the Vicar and foundation governors, who are also directly involved in the worship. Saints days and festivals are identified in the planning, which offers variety of experience for the pupils. Records are kept and evaluation, which takes account of pupils' views, is undertaken termly.

3.3 The Headteacher and Deputy lead the worship from Monday to Thursday and the Vicar visits on Friday. Other staff are also involved in leading the worship from time to time.

Pupils meet as a school in the hall, except on Thursdays, when first and middle school meet separately, giving pupils experiences which can be directed at their age and interests. Pupils have reacted favourably to the change in assembly time to mid-morning, when there seems to be less of a rush. The school visits the church for special services.

3.4 The acts of worship are integral to school life and pupils enjoy the opportunity to come together as a community. All staff are present with their classes. Those who lead appreciate the challenge of appealing to a wide age range and older pupils show understanding of the needs of younger children. Pupils are actively involved in the worship, in a variety of ways. Achievements in and out of school are celebrated, with particular emphasis on children's efforts for others. Stories emphasise moral values. The school's strong links with the parish are well exemplified in the collective worship experience, e.g. the Vicar's role and the commitment of a foundation governor (and Church organist), who plays the piano for the Wednesday act of worship.

3.5 The atmosphere in collective worship is relaxed and welcoming. Pupils from

Class 5 organise the setting up of the hall for worship, helping to create an orderly atmosphere. Music is played as pupils enter and leave. School musicians regularly contribute to the experience. Pupils are generally engaged in the worship, listening and responding well, singing in a lively fashion. They are comfortable with the prayers and know many by heart, though more opportunities for quiet reflection could enhance the spiritual experience.

3.6 Thought and money has been put into resources, to enrich the quality of the worship. The introduction of an OHP and screen have been successful in improving pupils' experience of singing, though some children at the extremities have difficulty in reading the screen.

4 SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The school's mission statement includes a strong commitment to spiritual development. There are opportunities for this development in the worship programme and with a little planning these could be enhanced. There is evidence of opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum, particularly in circle time and class time, and at the grace before lunch. The school environment in beautiful unspoilt countryside and the attractive gardens offers spiritual upliftment for pupils. A recent initiative has been the pond development. The extension of the hardstanding play areas would allow greater use of the grounds.

4.2 Moral development is encouraged within the school's collective worship programme, in circle time and in all areas of school life. The Christian values of the mission statement, reinforced by the behaviour policy, are taught overtly and by example. Classes draw up their own codes of conduct and there is good evidence of children's thought for others within the school and the wider community. Behaviour is good. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong.

4.3 Relationships in the school are good. Pupils are polite and confident, courteous to visitors. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously and relate well to younger pupils. The Headteacher's calm, understated leadership sets the tone for a caring community in which staff work together and every child is valued as an individual.

4.4 Pupils are aware of other cultures through the curriculum, particularly religious education, geography and literature, visits and through their support of charities. An after school French club takes place in the school hall.

5 LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY

5.1 Parents, are fully involved in school life; many help during the school day and there is an active parents association which organises social events and fundraising. Parents are pleased with the communication between school and

home.

5.2 Links with the church are excellent. The Vicar, who has responsibility for four parishes and another church school, is a regular visitor. Other members of the church are very supportive and the school is used for church activities. The Headteacher is a churchwarden in a neighbouring parish. Visits to the church for worship and curriculum purposes are an important part of the children's education. Foundation governors are actively involved and the school values the support it receives from the diocese. A group of children visited Dorchester Abbey to bring Christingles for the lighting of the school's Christingles.

5.3 The village values the school and its involvement in the life of the village. The school's sense of community is strengthened by its importance in the village community. The school has good working links with local schools and pupils take part in sporting, musical and drama events in the area. Artists, musicians, poets and drama groups bring wider experiences to the children's education. Pupils take part in day and residential visits. The school regularly supports charities, with children often initiating the effort.

6 PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST REPORT

6.1 The Section 13 Inspection raised 4 key issues:

In order to improve the quality of acts of collective worship further, the foundation governors, headteacher and staff should:

- a) ensure that the school's Church of England foundation is fully recognised and underpins the themes consistently;
- b) ensure that the detailed policy outlining guidelines for the delivery of worship in a variety of ways is put into practice completely;
- c) consider ways of involving pupils further in the planning, delivery and review processes, giving particular responsibility to the oldest pupils;
- d) develop evaluation procedures which are built into the planning stage and involve all those concerned with worship.

6.2 The school adopted a detailed action plan to address these issues and incorporated it into the school development plans. All staff and governors were involved, resources were allocated and support was received from the diocese.

6.3 The Church of England foundation effectively underpins the worship. The strength of this foundation and the links with the Church could be celebrated by overt signs, such as school noticeboards. At present there are few indications of the school's church status around the building.

Progress has been made in following policy guidelines.

Pupils are involved in the Act of Worship in a variety of ways.

Evaluation procedures are in place.

7 COMMENDATIONS

- * The caring, open atmosphere in the school.
- * The strong links between the Church and the school.
- * The efforts made by the school to address the issues of the last inspection and the progress which has been made in the delivery of collective worship.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Building upon the existing good practice the school consider:

- i) extending opportunities for quiet and reflection in collective worship
- ii) celebrating the school's Church of England foundation with signs around the school.

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SUMMARY

Hawridge and Cholesbury School is a popular school in an attractive rural area. Since its last inspection in 1995 it has seen some changes but it retains its essential characteristics. It is a caring, open community where staff and pupils work in a friendly atmosphere, supported by parents and governors. Links with the parish are very strong and the vicar is actively involved in school life.

The school meets the legal requirements for collective worship and parents are informed of their legal rights of withdrawal. There is scope for clarification in the information in the prospectus. The policy for collective worship reflects the aims of the mission statement and includes guidelines for delivery. Worship is carefully planned and evaluated. Pupils are comfortable with the worship experience and are involved in the organisation and delivery. There is a need to extend opportunities for quiet and reflection.

Within the school's mission statement are aims which should help in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. The strong links with the church underline these aims. Collective worship, circle time and class time offer opportunities for this development, as do other curricular and extra curricular experiences. The school environment, physical and as part of the village community adds to the education of pupils. Pupils are encouraged in their awareness of life in the wider community, particularly in the needs of others. A strong emphasis on values is taught and practised. Pupils behave well and older pupils are caring to younger children.

The school has addressed the issues raised in the 1995 Section 13 Report with care and commitment. Considerable progress has been made in these areas.