

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Upton St Leonards Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Upton St Leonards,  
Gloucester  
GL4 8ED

#### **Diocese of Gloucester**

Gloucestershire LA

Date of inspection: Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007

Date of last inspection: June 14<sup>th</sup> 2002

School's URN: 115658

Name of Headteacher: Ms Cottia Howard

Inspector: Mr Andrew Rickett 201

#### **Context**

Upton St Leonards is a larger than average size primary school. The majority of children are of white British heritage and come from the village. The school currently has a waiting list of parents from outside the immediate catchment area who wish to send their children to the school. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average. The Headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Upton St Leonards CE VC Primary as a church school are outstanding**

Upton St Leonards is a school that brings its Christian foundation alive. It is a community which is excited and enthused by its mission statement, to encourage a love of life and learning, and which seeks to understand how God's love for us can be central to an individual's spiritual development.

#### **Established strengths**

- Christian values permeate through the school and influence the wider community.
- Children have acquired a distinct vocabulary through which they can express complex thoughts and emotions.
- The leadership has an exceptionally clear vision for developing a community which has Christian love as its basis.

#### **Focus for development**

- Strengthen links between the school and church communities
- Provide opportunities for children to experience other faith groups.

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

A wonderful sense of Christian love pervades the entire school atmosphere and this has created a community which possesses a great sense of calm. It is demonstrated in the exceptional quality of relationships throughout the school which are built on the values of love and respect for each other. Members of this community have a mutual trust which means that they all feel valued and safe. This is borne out by the way that children speak with considerable assurance and with the confidence to engage with difficult questions about religious belief. Teachers encourage this, supporting the children when they struggle to understand a complex issue and helping them understand that faith can be a mystery. There are many opportunities for children to develop a spiritual dimension and to explore a sense of otherness. For example in an RE lesson, children were asked to explore the meaning of faith and reflect on what it means to them personally. The teacher created a superb atmosphere. The children were well prepared for this experience and treated it with great seriousness. Attitudes around the school towards learning are very positive because

children know that their work is valued highly. The school has also created a remarkably positive attitude towards life itself which gives children a real sense of joy; it is a very happy place. Standards are good and children with learning difficulties or disabilities in particular make significant progress. The school is very proud of its Council which is totally committed to making a difference to the lives of the children in the school. Their work is taken seriously and the degree to which adults listen to them is a reflection of the Christian love for each other which permeates the entire community.

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

Worship has a profound influence on the life of the school. Children and adults say that it is a tremendously important part of the school day because it gives them the opportunity to consider ideas and issues that are deeply relevant to their lives. The introduction of Values for Life has helped the school to develop a programme of themes for worship that allows the chosen topic to be explored in depth. The school has been very excited by this and this infectious enthusiasm has had a far-reaching impact beyond the actual place of worship. For example, following a worship series on "peace", Year 4 children recognised that they needed moments of peace in their lives but thought that there was not sufficient time for it. As a result they have identified places in school where they can go to find a time for quiet reflection. There are now many areas around the school that are dedicated spaces for this, which is indicative of the increasing importance of spirituality in the life of the school. Children say that they value these places and respect those who use them. The use of prayer has also become a far more important part of school life. Children will approach teachers and tell them about their prayer life outside of school and talk to adults in a conversational tone about the issues discussed in that week's worship. Worship is very carefully planned and uses contributions from children wherever possible. The school has its own Creed which is said by heart and the use of the modern version of the Lord's Prayer with other familiar liturgy creates links with the parish church.

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

The Headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision for promoting the school's Christian foundation. She is passionate about giving children opportunities to reach beyond the everyday experiences of life and to develop a spiritual dimension that recognises that there is something more to life than the ordinary. In doing this she has created a community where all its members have an enthusiasm for life and possess a real joy in being part of the school community. This makes a very happy school. The RE Co-ordinator is equally committed to promoting this and has introduced the new syllabus with great enthusiasm which she is successfully conveying to the rest of the school. The creation of a management post for a Spirituality and Ethos Co-ordinator is a reflection of the high emphasis the school places on creating opportunities for spirituality across the curriculum. Her important contribution has been part of the huge surge forward in the school's understanding of its Christian status. Links with the local church community are good. Foundation governors are very committed and have a firm grasp of the issues. These individuals are fundamental in maintaining the close links between the two communities. The vicar is a familiar figure in school and regards his role as a pastoral one. He is keen to develop even stronger links and some initiatives have been introduced to achieve this. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise that it is a special place for their children. They say that it gives their children a strong set of values which they can fall back on throughout their lives.