

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Soho Parish Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

23, Great Windmill Street
London
W1D 7LF

Diocese: London

Local authority: Westminster
Dates of inspection: 11th May 2011
Date of last inspection: 7th May 2008
School's unique reference number: 101131
Headteacher: Rachel Earnshaw
Inspector's name and number: Patrick Regan (NS 68)

School context

Soho Parish is a popular school in the heart of London's West End. It is smaller than average because of its limited space. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is not English are above average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs has reduced since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Soho Parish as a Church of England school are good

The school's vision and ethos, and everything it does, is strongly underpinned by the inclusive Christian values of caring for all individuals equally and commitment to serving others.

Established strengths

- Strong Christian values and inclusive nature ensure all pupils feel valued and special.
- Mutually supportive relationships between teaching and support staff.
- The school's thematic approach to Religious Education and Worship helps develop pupils' understanding of common themes across the major world faith traditions.

Focus for development

- Establish a regular monitoring cycle for RE in line with other core subjects.
- Formalise evaluation of Worship

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

There is a clear Christian ethos in the school where there is a strong emphasis on encouraging the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. There is an ethos of care, mutual respect, good quality relationships and support for one another. Staff are excellent role models for pupils. The 'open door' policy for parents is an accepted part of school routine. This, and the weekly parent coffee mornings with the learning mentor, provide time for valuable feedback on how well the curriculum is meeting the needs of the pupils. Concern for others, compassion, respect and forgiveness are key features. The school vision statement puts the child at the heart of the school within a friendly, caring Christian community where there is a respect for all faiths. The school's inclusive approach encourages sensitivity and develops the confidence and skills in the pupils to live in a diverse community. The school community demonstrates a strong commitment to fundraising for local and global charities and pupils are eager to respond to emergency situations. Pupils are well behaved and courteous and there is a calm atmosphere present in classrooms and

around the school. If disputes occur they are dealt with compassionately on the Christian principles of reconciliation, forgiveness and a fresh start. Pupils confirm that they enjoy coming to school, they feel safe, and that they are all treated equally and are listened to. When one pupil was asked why he travels such a long distance to school, he replied “they all understand me here”.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school prospectus describes the links with the church and how important collective worship is in the life of the school. School staff and local clergy work closely to deliver a climate of learning based on Christian beliefs. The worship coordinator works closely with the Associate Priest at St James, Piccadilly and together they are strengthening links between school and church. They jointly organise the themes for collective worship which are very closely linked with RE topics. This ensures the continuity of worship into RE lessons.

Themes are planned for the whole year with specific weekly themes that are delivered either in school or in church by the headteacher, clergy and other members of staff. Major Christian festivals are mainly celebrated in the school but plans are afoot to make more effective use of the local church. Evaluation of worship is undertaken by staff, parents and governors but feedback is currently verbal and needs to be formalised. The pupils respond well to worship, they participate well, show reverence and they sing enthusiastically. They are familiar and understand the Lord’s Prayer. One Year 2 pupil declared that “when we talk about Jesus, we enjoy it”.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Achievement and standards of attainment in RE in relation to the pupils’ background and prior attainment are good and are comparable with those in other core subjects. There is effective assessment of attainment in RE and pupils have a good understanding of how well they progress. While there is a school-wide scrutiny of planning and pupils’ recorded work, there are too few opportunities for the methodical observation of RE teaching as happens with the other core subjects. School staff are enthusiastic and committed to Religious Education in the school. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good overall. Lessons are well paced. Teachers use questioning very effectively, encouraging pupils to express their own feelings and opinions with confidence and sensitivity. They plan carefully for both attainment targets, effectively linking lesson content with pupils’ own experience. The RE scheme of work provides pupils with a good understanding of Christianity and of other faiths and practices and enables them to recognise and respect common beliefs. As a result pupils show very good subject knowledge and are able to relate it to their own lives. In the Reception class a real sense of awe and wonder was created in the telling of Jesus and the lost sheep. Year 4 was reflecting on some proverbs from the Old Testament and comparing traditional sayings from their own cultures. This was a direct follow up to the morning worship demonstrating the way RE and Worship topics are closely linked. The behaviour of pupils, their enthusiasm, their responses and the pride they take in their work are excellent.

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

Leadership and management are good overall with established strengths. There is a clear Christian commitment and vision in the school. All school staff and governors are involved in reviewing the school’s vision and mission statement annually. They are also involved in self evaluation and in identifying school improvement priorities to match the vision. The headteacher provides strong and sensitive leadership. The distinctive Christian nature of the school is reflected in all school documentation, displays and notice boards. The Governors play a strategic role and are involved in all aspects of school life. The strengthening links between Church and school has resulted in the associate priest of St James taking on the chaplaincy role and is available to help with RE lessons and to lead worship. The school has close links with the diocese and takes advantage of in-service training provided. The headteacher values the support and advice given by the diocesan advisers. Parents appreciate the approachability of school staff and they are fully supportive of the Christian ethos of the school.