

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Alphege Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Widney Manor Road
Solihull
B91 3JG

Diocese: Birmingham

Local authority: Solihull

Date of inspection: 12 December 2012

Date of last inspection: 31 October 2007

School's unique reference number: 103399

Headteacher: Mrs Jo Slough

Team Rector: Fr Tim Pilkington

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

St Alphege Junior serves the parish of St Alphege in Solihull. Its 280 pupils are mainly from a White British background. The school enjoys close links with its parish church. The headteacher has been in post for two years and is also executive headteacher of St Alphege Infant School.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Alphege Junior as a Church of England school are outstanding

St Alphege Junior School has a very strong sense of being a worshipping and welcoming community, with prayer an important part of school life. Everyone feels they belong and all feel encouraged to achieve highly.

Established strengths

- The strong sense of Christian community, modelled and embraced by everyone.
- High quality collective worship and religious education [RE], supporting pupils' spiritual development.
- The strong partnership with the church.
- The importance of prayer and reflection in the life of the school.

Focus for development

- Establish a forum for clergy and pupils to dialogue together on the deep questions of faith and life.

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

St Alphege Junior provides an excellent learning environment where pupils are proud to belong. This inclusive, cohesive community where church and school communities are integral and seamless, demonstrates Christian love and service and is much loved by its pupils and much appreciated by its parent body. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and their learning, feeling that school 'prepares you for life'. Many aspire to join the caring professions. Parents acknowledge their children are 'happy and well formed as individuals here'. Parents also value that 'the children's needs are met where they are' in this school which has a 'Christocentric approach' founded on the important values of love, forgiveness, honesty, respect and responsibility. As a result, pupils and parents from faiths other than Christianity also feel welcomed and included. The school is seen to value the widest range of achievement, including music, sport and a weekly Christian club. Indeed, pupils singing in the church choir wear a choir tie and have the opportunity to sing at public events, such as carol services, in the town. Pupils feel able to make a positive contribution, showing great care for younger children. They enjoy giving to charitable projects, through which they experience the Christian values of service and gratitude as 'it is your responsibility to help other people'. Bright, prominent displays, including the monthly feast days of the saints, and interactive prayer corners nurture pupils' spiritual development. The school grounds and especially the school garden, which both pupils and parents value, also contribute to pupils' engagement with the natural world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

High quality prayerful and meaningful worship is at the heart of this worshipping community, inspiring the school day and permeating all school life and practice. Pupils especially value worship led by the clergy team who lead worship every Wednesday. They appreciate the rich variety in the pattern of worship and enjoy worshipping together in a setting which enables them to encounter Jesus Christ. They say they learn from the stories they hear and also appreciate the songs that the school chaplain composes and plays on his guitar in worship. A good example is the song the children heard composed earlier that morning, based on The Feeding of The Five Thousand which 'helped us to understand the story a bit more'. They say they like going to church to worship and say 'in a church school RE and worship is a big thing and you get a different experience in a church school.' There is great support from the clergy team of St Alphege who meet with the head and worship co-ordinator to plan and review worship. Pupils are very comfortable with being in St Alphege Church as they are regularly there for worship or to engage in spiritually reflective activities. Key festivals in the church year such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated with services and Year 3 pupils participate enthusiastically in the 'Journey to the Stable' and Year 4 pupils in the 'Easter stations'. Additionally, pupils are involved as acolytes in the serving team for half termly Eucharist services to mark, for example, Advent and Candlemas. Feast days of the saints are also celebrated. The Worship Committee, comprising elected pupils from each class, meet twice a term to review worship. Pupils also share their reflections on worship through The Worship Diary as well as through a regular survey by the governors. Pupils enjoy researching for, and leading their class presentations in worship. Pupils welcome the opportunity to experience 'more worship outside' and work has already begun on this.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons which greatly help them to understand their own spiritual journey. RE has a very high profile in this school and is very effectively led by the RE co-ordinator who is a member of the senior management team as well as being a member of Solihull Standing Advisory Council on RE [SACRE]. Teaching and learning is very good with standards in RE as high as other core subjects. A number of pupils demonstrate very high levels of achievement. An excellent example is seen in lessons where Year 6 pupils use Bibles to research prophecies concerning Immanuel, demonstrating the progress they make from Year 3. They enjoy learning about faiths other than Christianity and 'studying lots of different religions' such as Hinduism and Islam. As a result, they are able to articulate what they have learned about growing up in a faith, whether it is through Hindu ceremonies or experiencing Christmas around the world. There is a systematic method of assessment and tracking which informs planning and demonstrates achievement. Marking is purposeful, with pupils recognising what they need to do in order to improve their work. Next steps, already part of future plans, include working on the programme of visits and visitors in order to enhance pupil learning. Many pupils show a good level of theological literacy, demonstrating knowledge of the Christian concept of trinity as well as their founding saint, St Alphege. The school welcomes establishing a forum for pupils to dialogue with clergy on the deep questions of faith and life.

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

St Alphege Junior's distinctive Christian vision is clearly evident and effectively promoted by the headteacher and her staff. This is embraced by the clergy and governors so that the school's Church of England foundation is articulated and celebrated by all. An excellent partnership exists with the church, school and diocese working closely together. The parish church is greatly used by the school and the school features in the parish magazine. Parents speak highly of the headteacher, her passion and enthusiasm and all her staff and their approachability. They say they feel valued as parents. Foundation governors are active in their support for the school. They ensure areas from the previous inspection have been addressed. For example, they have identified clear areas for future development, especially in their monitoring and evaluative role. They appoint effective teachers and give them opportunities for leadership experience. In all these ways, St Alphege Junior maintains excellence in everything.