



**Polehampton C of E Voluntary Controlled Infant School**  
**Hermitage Drive**  
**Twyford**  
**Berkshire**  
**RG10 9HS**



Type of school (Infant, Primary, Middle, Secondary etc)	Infant.
Status (VA, VC or Foundation, CTC or Academy)	Voluntary Controlled
Diocese	Oxford
Local Authority	Wokingham
Date of inspection	10.09.2008
Date of last inspection	20 <sup>th</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2004
School's Unique reference number	109981
Name of Headteacher	Miss Helen Ball
Name of Chair of Governors	Mrs Debbie Richards
Inspector's name and NS inspector's number	Mr Andy How 587

#### **Context**

This school, smaller than the national average, serves the villages of Twyford, Charvil and Ruscombe, near Reading. It has grown in size since the last inspection and is currently oversubscribed. Almost all of its children are of White British Heritage with just a few others, mainly Asian. The number of children with learning difficulties is below the national average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Polehampton as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The Headteacher's dynamic leadership and her success in realising her vision, are a reflection of the Governors' vision for the school as a Church school. The sense of community here is best expressed by a long-standing lunch-time controller who, when asked what she thought was the benefit of it being a Church school, resorted to gesturing a warm embrace with her arms and saying "It's just one big family: some children today don't experience it anywhere else." All aspects of school life draw from and are nourished by this.

#### **Established strengths**

- The enthusiastic and vibrant leadership of the Headteacher, and the commitment of Staff and Governors.
- The strong sense of community manifest particularly in the school's relationship with the Church.
- The powerful uniting ethos and family spirit which emanate from the school's Christian values.

#### **Focus for development**

- To give time to evaluating, adapting and embedding the new values/beliefs worship cycle so that collective worship becomes outstanding in the way it relates to and underpins all aspects of school life.

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

The school is bold in claiming that the positive judgements made by Ofsted (all aspects of the school at least 'good' and overall personal development and well-being of pupils 'outstanding') are attributable to the Christian values which shape its ethos. Evidence gathered from the inspection clearly substantiates the claim. Children enjoy school and like their teachers. They feel valued as individuals as well as important members of the community. This leads to the natural confidence they show in the classroom as well as the playground, to the strong family atmosphere referred to readily by many parents, and to the excellent behaviour seen throughout the school. It is also exemplified in the Headteacher's strongly expressed determination to see every child succeed in his/her learning. There is an awareness of those whose progress is less than it should be, questions are asked about the underlying reasons and appropriate action is taken. Equally, all staff spoken to felt highly valued, showing high levels of motivation and expressing pleasure at

being part of this strong family community. The growing popularity of the school in recent years is evidence of the high reputation the school enjoys in and beyond the local neighbourhood.

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

The Headteacher, in her role as worship leader, has introduced a new programme based on values and beliefs. This impacts the attitudes and behaviour of the children and in giving examples from the Bible it provides a Christian foundation and enables them to enjoy the stories of the Old and New Testament in the context of worship. Children participate by answering questions and they have been encouraged to write and say prayers. This has an impact on their personal lives, exemplified by one child who said that she sometimes prays "when I feel sad or when I've done something wrong" and by a parent who related that her child "chats to God"! Children sing well during worship and the school is proud of their school hymn which finishes with a prayer: "Thank you Lord for this new day, Please keep us safe as we learn and play, Help us to be fair and kind, And always keep you in mind". A Year 1 child said that, for her, assemblies were one of the most enjoyable aspect of school, and several Y2 children were able to say something about the current theme of 'compassion' and to relate it to their attitudes to each other. Members of the local clergy conduct worship on a fortnightly basis which leads to the development of a familiar relationship between themselves and the children as members of the wider community. Staff are positive in their attitude to worship and parents are involved on special occasions which enhances their involvement in the school family. Informal evaluation by the school shows that the impact of worship is good. With further development, already planned, it will become outstanding in its impact on every aspect of school life.

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

Quite clearly, this is the aspect which is most responsible for the distinctive Christian character which leads to the outstanding personal development of pupils and to the good standards of work recognised by OFSTED. The Chair of Governors speaks of the vision to grow the community aspect of the school, through developing its Christian character and links with the Church, and of the way this vision is being fully realised by the Headteacher. The successful impact of this is easily found through talking to members of the school community. One parent says: "I have seen a transformation of approach in the last five years." The incumbent, who offers strong pastoral support and encouragement, speaks of the strong partnership the Church enjoys with the school. He describes the Headteacher as "an impressive leader" who shows care and tolerance towards everyone in the community. "God is a given here", he says. Participation by the Headteacher in a Church service on Education Sunday led to the appointment of a Community Governor. Governors have participated in school self-evaluation training and have been intimately involved with the revision of documentation and the drawing up of a new mission statement: "To be an inclusive and caring Christian community where everyone is encouraged to aim high. Every Child Matters. Every Person Matters." The staff speak extremely highly of the Headteacher. The RE leader speaks enthusiastically of her excitement at the freedom and support which motivate and empower her to develop her own area, which she does very effectively. In enthusiastically articulating her clear vision for the school as a Church school, the Headteacher is careful to speak of ways in which those of other faiths and of none are catered for and included, and she is aware of the needs of the very small minority who do not embrace the Christian vision.