

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Etchingam Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Burgh Hill
Etchingam
East Sussex

Diocese: Chichester

LA: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 21 June 2006

Date of last inspection: October 2000

School's Unique reference number: 114502

Headteacher: Gill Knox

Inspector's name and number: Lesley Mason

School context

Etchingam CE School is a relatively small school. It is situated on the edge of the village and takes pupils from Etchingam and other nearby villages. Pupils generally come from prosperous homes and their attainment on entry is above average. The school building is outdated and three of the four classes are accommodated in temporary classrooms. However the environment is well-maintained and the school enjoys an excellent reputation, having been over-subscribed for some years now. The headteacher took up her post in June 2005.

Summary Judgement

Etchingam CE School is a good church school with many strengths. Pupils enjoy coming to school, achieve highly and speak of their teachers as supportive and 'fun'. Parents appreciate the clear Christian ethos of the school and governors and staff value the headteacher's 'open-door' policy. The whole school community works together to make the most of very limited accommodation. Opportunities for enrichment of learning through extra-curricular clubs and activities promote the development of the 'whole' child. The school has good links with the local parish and enjoys the support of the rector in using the church building as both a learning resource and a place of worship.

Established strengths

- the leadership shown by the headteacher and the continuing work by the governors and staff to raise the profile of the school as a church school
- the involvement of the whole school community in developing and living out the new mission statement
- the pride shown by the whole school community in maintaining a high-quality environment for learning despite severely restricted space

Focus for development

- in the prospectus make clearer links with the Christian foundation of the school
- ensure that Christian values are expressed explicitly within the RE, SMSC and behaviour policies
- extend opportunities for pupils' spiritual development by evaluating the provision and pattern of Collective Worship
- include the teaching of RE within the proposed new framework for a creative curriculum

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

Pupils at Etchingam School enjoy learning and speak with enthusiasm of opportunities to learn in exciting ways. They value being consulted through meetings of the School Council and felt that the newly-introduced buddy system is of particular benefit to the youngest children. It is clear that the school's Christian values do underpin relationships between all members of the school community, although these values are not always made explicit.

Opportunities for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development are strong; pupils learn about important issues such as ecological awareness and staying healthy and are encouraged to support various charities both locally and abroad. A clear focus on promoting spiritual development has recently been identified by the headteacher. Pupils explained how they had been involved in developing a focal area in the entrance hall and some had enjoyed writing prayers to be displayed there. However,

the SMSC policy does not include any explicit reference to the core Christian values which should provide the foundation for SMSC planning.

Children behave well in school and relationships between all members of the school community are very good. This is due, at least in part, to a clear policy for pupil behaviour which recognises the importance of involving children in establishing rules and in giving them opportunities to understand their responsibilities as members of the school community. The adults in the school community ensure that all pupils feel valued and cared for; those with individual needs are well supported, reflecting Christian care and concern.

Grade: 2

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

Worship is central to the life of the school and is led by the headteacher, the deputy head and the rector. Daily Christian assemblies help children to recognise the church foundation of the school and to understand aspects of Christian faith. In the worship observed, children participated enthusiastically and sang with evident enjoyment. They were able to recall the theme for the week and responded appropriately to the lighting of the candle before engaging in prayer. The children participated in a lively way and were able to say afterwards that they learn about God during worship. As the hall is rather small, a quieter, more worshipful response could be encouraged if worship occasionally took place in smaller groups and if a focal point was more readily visible.

There are strong and effective links with the local church. The rector works alongside the headteacher to ensure consistent planning for worship and he spoke enthusiastically of the regular services which are held in the church. Pupils were able to explain that theirs is a church school and that their daily worship helped them "be more confident". The school's policy provides a clear rationale for Collective Worship. However, the school's provision for worship could be enriched by the inclusion of distinctively Anglican prayer and liturgy.

Grade: 2

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

Parents, governors and staff all acknowledge the key role played by the headteacher in making the Christian ethos of the school stronger and more evident. The church foundation of the school is made clear through displays and religious symbols to be found in the hall and entrance area. A new mission statement has been written after consultation with staff and governors; this is beautifully displayed in the main hall and is included in the prospectus.

Staff feel valued and recognise that the headteacher has been quick to analyse and build on existing strengths, whilst also embracing new challenges. Within the past year the governors have developed more effective committee structures utilising individual strengths to achieve the best outcomes for the school. Governors take part in monitoring curriculum areas and collective worship. They particularly value the excellent relationships enjoyed by the school with the local community, the parish church and groups such as the Bruderhof.

Pupils and their parents are regularly consulted about the school's progress. Results from recent questionnaires indicated that 95% of parents thought that the school is well managed while 97% recognised that teaching and learning is good. Parents spoke of being made to feel welcome and finding the headteacher to be approachable and friendly. They recognise and value her efforts to promote the church school ethos.

Grade: 2