

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Lower Park Street,
Cambridge
CB5 8AR

Diocese: Ely

LA: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 5th and 12th July 2006

Date of last inspection: 5th and 7th March 2001

School's Unique reference number: 110837

Headteacher: Miss Dorothy J Betts

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Susan Metcalfe 249

School context

Park Street school is in the parish of St Clements in the centre of Cambridge. Clerical and pastoral support to the school is currently given by the Chaplain of Trinity College and the Chair of the Foundation Governors, both ordained ministers. The 121 pupils come from a range of backgrounds, cultures and faiths, including those of no recorded faith. The school celebrates this rich heritage through active links with centres of the different faiths, Churches and colleges in the city and surrounding area. The turnover of pupils is high as many parents come to the university to study or teach for varying periods of time.

Summary Judgement

Park Street primary school is an outstanding Church of England VA primary school. The school self evaluation procedures are of a very high quality.

Established strengths

The leadership of the Headteacher, the chair of governors and the governing body is outstanding and gives clear, firm direction to the school. Relationships are very good. Staff and pupils demonstrate the distinctive Christian vision of concern and care for others in all class work, in the development of pupil's personal behaviour strategies and in out of class activities.

Focus for development

The school has identified key areas for development to move the school further forward, including the need for a quiet space for reflection, prayer, comfort and support, as well as further in-service training for staff with members of the other taught faiths. The Governors should also explore ways in which practical collective worship pressures on the Headteacher could be supported.

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

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, makes outstanding provision to meet the needs of all learners, especially those who are experiencing difficulties with adapting their behaviour to being a member of the school community. Pupils feel happy to discuss problems with the teachers and other adults. Very good systems are in place within classrooms to guide pupils and help them monitor their progress in this area. Golden rules for living together are on posters in classes and about the school. Classrooms have an effective self evaluation system comprising of a series of pictures ranging from thunderclouds through to the rainbow, which pupils use honestly to assess their behaviour throughout the day. "Golden time", time for activities outside of the national curriculum, occurs on a Friday afternoon. Extra special successes, including behaviour and extra curricular activities are celebrated in collective worship and also in class with a 'marble award' towards special treats. Learners from all groups feel valued and special, including those from a minority ethnic or faith background, those who have special educational needs and those who

are experiencing difficulties or causing problems for others. Pupil's voices are heard in the school council with many of their suggestions being adopted by the schools senior managers in school policies, for instance with regard to play resources and activities. Learners of all types flourish and fulfil their potential, whatever their gifts or talents; their academic achievement is high in relation to prior attainment and background. Whatever their religious faith, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Relationships within the school community are exemplary and characterised by Christian care and concern for others.

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

Collective worship is outstanding and occupies a vitally important place in the life of the school, being a key element in its Christian witness. Acts of worship are very carefully planned by the Headteacher and the Chaplain of Trinity College in particular, being thoughtful, imaginative and instructive, and involving high levels of participation by individuals and groups of learners. Pupils demonstrate a very positive Christian response to the acts of worship. Older students prepare the hall very well for assembly, putting out a focus table with the Bible, cross and candle, arranging seating for staff and pupils, operating the CD player and organising the overhead projector ready for the act of worship.

The Headteacher is also the school pianist and although this puts extra pressure onto her when she is leading collective worship, pupils gain tremendously from making music together. Pupils of all ages sit very attentively, sing enthusiastically and listen very carefully, being more than willing to contribute their ideas and opinions after mature thought about the questions asked of them. For instance when asked to consider what career they wanted to follow many of the older pupils had a very clear picture not only of what they would like to do but also the skills they would need to achieve their ambitions; careers including becoming a chef, a doctor and as research scientists.

Worship is consistently and recognisably Christian, following the schools Anglican tradition. Excellent use is made of the Chaplain of Trinity College especially for regular assemblies, but other churches and chapels give very good support to special services for key events in the Christian year, including Easter and Christmas. The school is also highly sensitive to the beliefs and traditions of those of other faiths and of none and takes care to ensure that acts of worship provide for their spiritual and moral development as well as that of Christian believers. Visitors from different faiths are warmly welcomed into collective worship and participate in religious education lessons. The school has identified the need for guidelines for visiting assembly takers as an area for development to enhance this work further.

How effective is the religious education?

The effectiveness of religious education is good with many outstanding features, especially with regard to the preparation and delivery of the curriculum to the oldest pupils. Religious education has a very high status, being recognised by governors, senior managers and other staff as being of particular importance in this Christian school. Thus there is good provision of staff, staff training, curriculum time and learning resources. Achievement in relation to the learners' background and prior attainment is good and standards are at least comparable with those in the core subjects. The subject manager is able to check standards as well as coverage by regular assessment of work in books, in displays and as shown in collective worship. The quality of both learning and teaching is at least good, with that for older pupils being particularly outstanding. The subject makes a significant contribution to the learners' spiritual and moral development. Whatever their own faith background learners enjoy the subject and acknowledge its relevance to their own lives. For instance, year 5 and 6 pupils were looking at 'rites of passage' from the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus, examining those from different faiths as well as from the secular world. By the use of a very good range of artefacts collected from the staff and parents including baptism robes, marriage certificates and photographs,

and a list of high quality questions, pupils were able to relate their findings to their own lives. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed with time especially given to enable the subject manager to audit resources in line with the scheme of work and to match these to standards and the quality of pupils work. The school continues to build on community support, especially the support of those of other faiths and from other churches in the locale. The diocesan education officer has been instrumental in supporting staff development and the subject manager enjoys the opportunity to meet with other religious education managers in regular diocesan led meetings. The school recently made a very successful visit to the Mosque in Peterborough and has identified the need to extend these types of links further, to include in service training for staff for further interaction with members of other taught faiths.

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

The Headteacher is an outstanding leader for the school. Along with the chair of the governing body, the chair of the foundation governors and the challenging but supportive governing body as a whole she provides exceptional and effective leadership. All work together in a very close partnership. The school's Christian purpose is very well thought-out and has been clearly communicated to parents in the prospectus and reinforced in newsletters and other communications. Issues raised at the previous inspection relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils have been thoroughly and carefully discussed and rather than an individual policy constructed, each area has been carefully woven into all the schools policies and working practice.

All members of the school staff support the school as a Christian family and this is evident in the very positive relationships between staff and pupils and evident in practice in all aspects of life in the school. Photographic evidence from school outings to places such as farms, and residential visits made by older pupils to activity centres, demonstrate the care and support given to all pupils by the staff of the school. During the inspection the pupils were proudly preparing displays of their work to show to their parents during the open afternoon, showing the Christian ethos, vision and purpose in active practice in school activities.

Management of the school is likewise outstanding. There are well-established and highly effective systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing each area of focus from the school development plan, including that of collective worship. The very personal management of the Headteacher, especially her high visual profile about the school ensures that teaching and non teaching staff feel involved and appreciated, with relationships very good between all members of the school community. Learners speak very appreciatively of the school's Christian ethos, the commitment of the staff to all individuals and the high quality of education provided. Although the parish church does not at present have an Anglican incumbent, the school enjoys a very close and productive relationship with the churches and colleges in the local area.

SIAS report July 2006 Park Street Church of England, Lower Park Street, Cambridge. CB5 8AR