

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Stainton Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Stainton
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 0ET

Diocese of Carlisle

Local Authority: Cumbria
Headteacher: Mr Peter Shelton
Inspection date: 23rd January 2006
Date of previous inspection: October 2000
SIAS Inspector NS : Mrs M J Lewis

School context

An average sized, rural, village primary school situated in the parish of Dacre near Penrith in the English Lake District. Children attend from the local village and the wider surrounding area. There is a significant proportion of movement of children into and out of the school.

Summary Judgement

Stainton Church of England Primary School has a good Christian ethos promoted by the very good example of the headteacher and staff, supported by the Chair of Governors, the local vicar and Methodist minister and reflected in the outstanding pupil relationships across the school.

Established strengths

- Outstanding relationships between pupils in the school
- Collective Worship is of good quality involving all members of the school community
- The teaching and learning of Religious Education is good and children develop a very good understanding and achieve very well
- Good relations with the local churches and clergy that the school works hard to maintain and extend
- Leadership of the school as a church school is very good.

Focus for development

- Ensure that the Religious Education syllabus is appropriately balanced
- Ensure systematic and planned monitoring and evaluation of Religious Education and Collective Worship

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

The distinctive Christian ethos is good with some outstanding aspects and supports the needs of all learners. The Christian Foundation of the school is recognised by the children who are valued and feel special. The school has a clear mission statement and overall aims which are evident and known to all who come into school. The learning environment is excellent and relationships in school are outstanding. The Christian Foundation is very well represented and is visible in symbols and displays throughout. Prayers are a daily occurrence of school life. From the nursery onwards children develop friendships and a clear understanding of treating each other with thought, kindness and respect. They recognise and admire good qualities in each other and are happy to share these. Their behaviour in lessons is excellent and they are helpful to each other and the adults who teach and work with them. Their individual talents and endeavours are clearly recognised by staff and celebrated in school assemblies. The children and parents are very positive about the school atmosphere and a significant proportion of parents choose to bring their children a good distance to attend. A caring, family atmosphere is particularly evident at lunchtime when pupil care is outstanding both for those who take school meals and those who bring their own. This is a pleasant social time for children and older children help younger ones and midday supervisors ensure care for all individuals. The school grounds are extensive with tables and benches for outside lunch and work in summertime. There are ongoing and effective developments in the grounds which involves the work of the children as part of their environmental awareness and education with a focus on care for God's world.

The cultural development of the children is good and their spiritual, moral and social development is very good. It is effectively supported by the Christian ethos. The school meets

the needs of the individual well and provides for all in its activities and experiences. It works hard to ensure that, although most children come mostly from a White British background, they develop an understanding of cultures and faiths different from their own.

Whilst talking to a group of children over school lunch they were asked:

"What's the best thing about this school?"

In reply, several mentioned the teachers – their helpfulness, friendliness and kindness were all independently confirmed. This led to a discussion of that day's assembly theme of "Love Is Kind" which ended with a reflective silence when one of the children said of a rather shy person who was present at the table:

"X is the kindest person in our class".

This was a completely natural, unembarrassing comment that others thoughtfully pondered and then agreed with. Such mature and relaxed affirmation of a fellow pupil deeply moved more than the adult observer.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community?

Collective worship has a good impact on school life and the community.

Acts of worship are held each day for all children, whether as a whole school, as a key stage or as a class. Whole school Worship is well attended by most staff. All teachers are involved at times in leading Worship and the regular input of the Vicar and the Methodist minister is much appreciated. Organisation of delivery and planning of individual Acts of Worship is good but evaluation is not yet fully in place to support future improvements. Systems and key themes are developing to ensure continuity between whole school and class Worship. The children enjoy Worship times and participate well. They pay careful attention reflecting on clear messages, respond thoughtfully to questions and sing enthusiastically. Children are given good opportunities for reflection, prayer and writing prayers during Worship and lessons, special focus assemblies and in free time. A spiritual garden in the heart of the school is available as a quiet area.

How effective is the Religious Education in the school?

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good. It makes a strong contribution to school ethos and to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teachers and staff plan lessons well with clear learning objectives and well matched tasks to enable children to engage in a wide range of activities that promote a good understanding of religion and learning from religion. Pupils enjoy Religious Education and take an active part in lessons although on some occasions they have insufficient time at the end of lessons to discuss their ideas and explore fully what they have learned. Although the subject leader has not yet been able to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in Religious Education this is planned to begin shortly. She has worked extremely hard to revise and resource the scheme of work. It includes a strong Christian emphasis and in Key Stage 2 comparative studies of Judaism and Hinduism. Although younger children in Key Stage 1 have some experiences of other faiths than Christianity this is not specifically included in the scheme of work. At Key Stage 2 the teaching of other faiths is in lengthy blocks which need to be reconsidered to produce an overall balance. Nevertheless the quality of children's learning is good and in Year 6 they demonstrate a wide knowledge and understanding of religion.

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

Leadership and management of the school as a church school are good with some very good features.

The headteacher is strongly committed to developing and maintaining a strong Christian ethos and vision for the school. This is achieved very well with good support from the staff, governing body, children, parents and local clergy. The headteacher has been co-opted onto the Parochial Church Council and is active in strengthening and developing church/ school links. The school prospectus has recently been rewritten and is informative for parents who are made welcome and given ready access to the school. The well -established School Council ensures that children's views are heard and acted upon.