

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Thurlow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Little Thurlow

Haverhill

Suffolk

CB9 7HY

**Diocese St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

LEA: Suffolk

Date of inspection: 23 February 2006

Date of last inspection: January 2001

School's unique reference number: 124698

Name of Headteacher: Elizabeth Graham

Inspector's name: Simon Windmill

#### Context

Thurlow CEVCP school is a small rural primary school serving Thurlow and other nearby villages. It is a popular school, and is highly regarded by its community. Socio-economic factors in the local area are generally favourable. There are a few learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.

#### Summary Judgement

Thurlow school's effectiveness and distinctiveness as a church school is judged to be outstanding. Its Christian ethos firmly underpins school life. Provision for meeting children's needs, the impact of Collective Worship on learners, and the school's leadership and management are outstanding.

#### Established strengths

- The school's Christian ethos and values are outstanding, and underpin the life of the school
- Caring relationships between learners, staff and governors is outstanding
- The behaviour, involvement and independence of learners is outstanding

#### Focus for development

- Continue to explore with staff their own question, "What does it mean to be a church school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?"
- Continue the discussion on the spiritual development of learners, so that staff develop an even better shared understanding of how this can be fostered
- Continue to support the development of governors who are new to the school or in new roles

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

The school's provision for meeting the needs of all its learners is outstanding. The Christian ethos and gospel values are very apparent and have an outstanding impact on the school. All relationships within the school are outstandingly warm, caring and respectful. The school's welcoming and inclusive atmosphere reflects this, as does the outstanding behaviour of learners, who feel secure and valued as individuals. Learners contribute in many ways to the life of the school, and respond exceptionally well to taking responsibility for a variety of day-to-day tasks. Learners receive outstanding care and support in their learning and personal development, and the staff are outstanding role models in this. The staff are exploring the question "What does it mean to be a church school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?" as a means of deepening their understanding and further improving the way spiritual growth of learners is fostered. The school is very highly regarded by its wider community.

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

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective Worship is firmly based on Christian principles and teaching, and provides very good opportunities for fostering personal spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learners enjoy worship, and are actively involved in many ways. Worship reflects the main events of the Church year, and always includes prayer, praise and teaching. Teachers lead Collective Worship in weekly blocks, which allows them to develop themes as the week passes. Prayer is a natural part of school life, and learners have a very good understanding of its purposes. They readily say

their own prayers in Collective Worship, and a book of children's own prayers is compiled. The worship co-ordinator monitors and evaluates worship, with input from learners. Church links are very good. Some services are held in the Parish church, and the incumbent visits and leads Collective Worship in school as often as he can. Learners readily support charitable giving, eg for a Kenyan child's schooling. Church members run a very well supported 'Jesus and Me' school club. Learners' understanding of the Christian faith is supplemented by teaching and visits to places of worship of other faiths, such as Judaism and Sikhism. Staff are considering whether training or other input could further enhance Collective Worship.

**How effective is the Religious Education in the school?**

Leadership and management is outstanding.

The headteacher and governors promote the school's distinctive Christian ethos and values exceptionally well. The headteacher gives outstanding leadership, and staff feel highly valued and supported. An excellent team spirit is evident within the staff. The governors' informed, active and supportive role in school development is very good. Learners' aspirations from the active School Council are fed back to governors, who take them into account. Staff and governors have given careful consideration to the ways that the school environment shows its Christian foundation, with the Lord's Prayer prominently displayed in the hall, and through other displays around the school. The school is planning to systematically seek parents' opinions about the education provided.

SIAS February 2006 Thurlow CE VC Primary School Suffolk CB9 7HY