

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Acle St Edmund Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Fletcher Way  
Acle  
Norwich  
NR13 3RQ

#### **Diocese: Norwich**

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> January 2007

Date of last inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> September 1999

School's unique reference number: 121024

Headteacher: Helen Banks

Inspector's name and number: Reverend Philip G. Blamire (382)

#### **School context**

Acle is a slightly larger than average Church of England voluntary controlled primary school serving an area of mainly owner occupied properties. The Parish Priest covers a multi-benefice of six parishes, including Acle, and has been in post for nearly two years. Most children are White British. A small number of children speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with a statement of special education needs is above the national average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Acle St Edmund Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good with a number of outstanding qualities.**

The school enjoys celebrating and promoting the Christian values of love, service, forgiveness and tolerance. Pupils are given every encouragement to participate fully in highly productive relationships with the local Christian worshipping community. Significantly this strong sense of what it means to be Christian impacts positively on the attitude, behaviour and generosity of spirit evident throughout the school.

#### **Established strengths**

- Outstanding partnership between the school and the local churches
- Pupils' outstanding level of participation and very positive response to collective worship
- Pupils and staff aspire to the highest standards where every child matters

#### **Focus for development**

- Develop the processes in place to effectively monitor and evaluate the school's commitment to Christian values
- Extend the use and availability of 'quiet areas' to further strengthen pupils' spiritual development
- Develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Lord's Prayer and other traditional prayers

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

The school acts out its confident belief in the Christian message of love and service in nearly every aspect of its daily life and routine. From the whole class use of 'Feeling-Flowers' in Reception to the well-monitored buddy system through the rest of the school, there is a significant impact on the school community of the Christian values of friendship and openness. Pupils feel safe and secure. When conflicts arise they are dealt with promptly and the children say, almost always effectively. Pupils talk openly and enthusiastically about the reward system that they see encouraging and promoting healthy life-styles and hard work. The School Council have effectively influenced changes in the Tuck Shop, the school environment and in fund-raising activities for charities (locally, the James Paget Hospital and nationally Jeans for Genes). As a consequence the behaviour of pupils in and around the school is very good, underlining as it does, the 'Respect' agenda that is displayed prominently around the school. Pupils see helping and caring for each other as key issues in their behaviour; that applies between children as well as in their relationships with staff. A Midday Supervisor commented that the school was "a very special place where we are valued and respected by pupils and teachers". This very special relationship was emphasised powerfully and genuinely in a KS2 act of worship when a member of staff who had been affected by a family matter was greeted with a card and gift by pupils reflecting, as it did, on the theme for the worship of Jesus' message – "Love as I love you." In and around the school this act of care and concern is reflected in the vibrant, colourful displays of children's work, including views on the Bible and Christian symbols. The new school badge, designed by a pupil, depicts St Edmund's Church, further emphasising the distinctive Christian nature of the school. The Pre-School and After-School Club, that meet in a separate building on the school site, are warmly included in the life of the school. The parent involved in managing this facility spoke of the "impact that Christian values have on the pupils" and how they "last through the caring attitudes towards each other". There are quiet areas being developed both outside and inside the building to allow pupils and staff 'space' within the busy schedule of the day. The school recognises that these will need developing to underpin the spiritual development of the school community.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

The daily act of worship, as distinct from assembly time, in both Key Stages and as a whole-school is central to the life of the school. Pupils are fully involved in its presentation. They invariably stage-manage the worship, play their musical instruments for the pupils to come into, act out scenes linked to the parable or story, sing well the hymns or worship songs and lead the prayers they have written themselves. The themes and focus for worship are carefully planned by the staff with the local clergy and are linked to Christian values. On other occasions the traditions of other faiths are included. In a whole-school act of worship observed, the pupil acting the part of the Good Shepherd was clear, articulate and convincing; Reception pupils engaged as the 99 sheep with self-made cut-outs; all the pupils sang without inhibition and signed the worship song – the second verse silently. This was a highly significant and powerful spiritual moment in an outstanding act of worship. The impact was stunning.

During an act of worship, the moment that the worship candle is lit below the large wooden cross is the moment for quiet reflection. All are encouraged to wonder and engage. A prayer is read. Pupils comment enthusiastically about their worship time describing the ones led by the Parish Priest as particularly "fun and lively". There is a clear sense that the pupils are also leaders of worship due to their considerable input and involvement drawn together and choreographed by the staff. The pupils are fully involved in the tradition of the Christian year taking a leading rôle in each celebration involving the local Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic ministers and congregations. Services in St Edmund's are pupil-led and as one parent observed "they (the children) are no longer afraid to go to church".

The Foundation Governors monitor the effectiveness of collective worship by analysing the written responses to questionnaires and using the comments to influence their planning for each term with senior staff.

The school recognises the need to allow pupils a deeper sense of their prayer life with a knowledge of the Lord's Prayer and other traditional prayers.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good.**

The Foundation Governors and the Acting Headteacher (in the absence of the Headteacher) talk enthusiastically about their vision for the school as one that embraces "servant hood, inclusivity and uniqueness". This is clearly borne out by the real and tangible ethos that pervades the school, its pupils and staff. Each of the Foundation Governors is actively involved in promoting the distinctiveness of the school as a church school. One referred to the "unapologetic links" with the local churches and this is reflected in the good and strong partnership that has developed particularly over the past two years. Pupils talked enthusiastically about their involvement in designing and dressing trees for the Christmas Tree festival held at St Edmund's as well as the Shoe Box service and the Prayer Labyrinth in the Methodist Chapel. Parents, through the annual questionnaire to them, invariably respond positively to these events which they attend willingly. There are good processes in place to monitor and challenge the school in this shared vision. The school realizes that they need to develop these relatively new processes fully in order to monitor its effectiveness. The newly-formed Parents' Forum is recognised by the Parent Governors as being a "very useful vehicle to share views with the school". All adults working in the school are part of the Norfolk Well-Being Project and there is clear evidence that the project helps them to feel a significant part of the school's vision as a church school.

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