

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bardwell Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane
Bardwell
Bury St Edmunds
IP31 1AD

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk
Dates of inspection: 9 February 2009
Date of last inspection: October 2004
School's unique reference number: 124687
Headteacher: Caroline Clarke
Inspector's name and number: Simon Windmill 182

School context

Bardwell Primary school is smaller than average. Most pupils have White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and / or disabilities is above average, most having behavioural, social or emotional difficulties. The school is emerging from an unsettled period, and many improvements are being made under the leadership of the headteacher, and her team of governors, many of whom are fairly new to their roles.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bardwell as a Church of England school are good

The school's Christian ethos is apparent in all aspects of its life and work, making a great contribution to the school's happy and caring atmosphere. Under the leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors work very well as a mutually supportive team.

Established strengths

- The Christian ethos, which underpins the life of the school
- The strong links with the church
- Pupils' behaviour

Focus for development

- Monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship on pupils
- Developing an area inside the school for pupils' prayer and reflection
- Giving pupils more opportunities to say their own prayers in collective worship

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

Care and support for pupils and staff is very good. Pupils of all abilities are able to flourish in their learning and personal development. The school's Christian ethos is soundly based on Christian values, which have a very positive influence on the life of the school.

Relationships within the school are very good, and are reflected in the school's warm, welcoming, inclusive and friendly atmosphere. Pupils enjoy school, and feel safe and secure. They said, 'I feel happy here because it's special', 'It's fun!', and 'People are helpful and friendly, and look out for each other.'

Pupils learn from the good role models of staff and other adults, who help them develop self-confidence and independence. Behaviour is very good. Pupils have a say in making the rules, understand and respect them, and know the consequences if rules are broken. They say there is no bullying.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and a strong awareness and concern for the needs of others. The school plans to create a quiet area for reflection inside the building.

The School Council gives pupils a say in running the school, which they value. They are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles, and the school is working for 'Healthy Schools' status.

The Christian identity of the school is evident in many good, lively displays depicting Christian themes. The school's aims and vision statement are also displayed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is good. All pupils attend, and worship has a very positive impact on school life, reflected in the good relationships within the school. It is based on the Christian gospel, and includes singing, teaching and prayer. Staff lead most acts of worship, along with a foundation governor and the local vicar, who also offers pastoral care.

Worship is well planned, with themes reflecting the Church year. A cross and candle provide a visual focus for worship. The church is used for the main Christian festivals such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas, along with a very wide range of other 'special' services throughout the year. These services are well attended by parents and others. Many pupils also attend church on Sundays.

Pupils enjoy worship, especially when they have a part to play. They value their opportunities for quiet reflection, and can relate what they experience in worship to their everyday life in school. They enjoy contributing to worship, especially through drama.

Pupils have a good understanding of different purposes of prayer, such as giving thanks, saying sorry, and asking for help or healing. They would like even more opportunities to write their own prayers to use during collective worship. They know the Lord's Prayer, and some Anglican greetings. Grace is said at lunchtime.

Worship records are kept, with some informal monitoring of worship, but at present there is no formal system for monitoring and evaluating the impact of collective worship on pupils.

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

Governors give good support to the school. They are keen to undergo training in their roles, and are gaining a good understanding of their responsibilities. The headteacher is seen by staff, parents and governors as a very effective leader, and staff feel valued and cared for by her. They appreciate the support she gives.

Parents speak very highly of the family atmosphere generated through the school's caring relationships. They are very happy with their school, and feel well informed about its activities.

The school has excellent links with the church. The PCC donated Bibles to pupils, which were very well received, particularly as some pupils had never had a Bible. Pupils are also getting involved with the restoration of the church bells.

The school is held in very high regard by its wider community, and is seen as being at the heart of the village. Some pupils get involved with village events such as the church fete, and the community is invited to the school's Open Day.

Pupils contribute enthusiastically to fund-raising for a wide range of charities, such as Children in Need, Samaritans Purse and others.

Issues for development from the previous inspection were: develop and monitor collective worship, clarify parents' right to withdraw pupils from worship, invite parents to worship, revise the brochure to reflect the school's Christian foundation, display Christian symbols and use the Lord's Prayer. These have all been implemented.

The school's self evaluation is accurate, providing a secure base for future development.