

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bentley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road,
Bentley,
Ipswich
IP9 2BT

Diocese: St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Dates of inspection: 5th June 2008

Date of last inspection: 26th February 2004

School's unique reference number: 124754

Headteacher: Mr. Joe McSorley

Inspector's name and number: Robert Miller 357

School context

This is a small rural school, contained mainly in a Victorian building. The school has recently had extensive building work completed. Two thirds all its pupils come from within the catchment area. There are 52 pupils on roll of which, almost all, come from White British backgrounds. A very small number of them require extra help with their learning. The headteacher, a practising Christian, has been in post for three years.

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

The school's commitment to building Christian values into the ethos of the school and into the learning opportunities presented to the children is central to all aspects of school life. The good relationships that exist between the school and church serve to further enhance these opportunities.

Established strengths

- All pupils feel valued and special and enjoy their learning experiences.
- Excellent relationships and support of pupils by adults at the school.
- The headteacher, vicar and foundation governors' efforts to promote a distinctive Christian vision for the school.

Focus for development

- Challenge and encourage the school community to share their views on the vision for a distinctly Christian church school.
- Adopt and implement a target within the school improvement plan directly linked with raising the profile of Bentley as a church school.
- Provide training, with the support of the diocese, for all who are involved in leading acts of worship.

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

Bentley is a good school where relationships are exemplary, based on Christian principles. Children feel happy and secure. They say they are valued as individuals and benefit from the warm family atmosphere. Their individual photographs contained within a heart shaped frame adorn the hall alongside the school prayer. Christian values are evident, particularly in the way pupils show care and concern for one another. Parents say that the school has a special quality that enables their children to leave school as *"caring and polite individuals"* and to flourish as individuals. Pupils with learning difficulties say that they love coming to school, where they receive excellent support. All pupils seek to fulfil their potential by making great efforts to do well and they say, *"Teachers make time to help us"*. The Christian identity inside the school is evident as soon as you enter the building with a cross on a wall. Outside areas have been created for both play and quiet reflection. These features, together with the teaching of religious education, which children say that they enjoy, have a positive impact on the good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is characterised by their openness and consideration of the beliefs of other faiths. The school has identified the need for more visiting speakers from other faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The collective worship seen during the inspection was good in quality. Worship forms a very important and integral part of school life, involving ministers from several local denominations. Prayers which children choose are said at lunchtimes. Acts of worship currently take place in the hall, which is transformed for this purpose, with a table, upon which a lighted candle and wooden figures depicting the family are placed. This acts as the focal point. Pupils say they enjoy taking part in worship particularly where they have to act out a story from the Bible. One such example was "The Good Samaritan". This had been enacted at a previous act of collective worship. Children say that they derived great benefit from it and the need to help those less fortunate than themselves. Their attitudes and behaviour during collective worship were exemplary. Children and adults delivered the singing, heard during the inspection, with gusto. Pupils know and understand the Lord's prayer, which they say regularly. Worship makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development, by encouraging them to reflect on their relationships with each other and the wider world. The vicar who is a frequent visitor to the school leads worship and uses curriculum time to explain church history. The major Christian services take place at the parish church, in which the pupils increase their knowledge of Anglicanism. They also have the opportunity to meet members of the local community, which adds to their social development.

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

The high quality of the leadership of the head teacher, contributes significantly to the success of the school. He promotes a clear Christian vision by being a good role model to the whole school community. He has secured a great team spirit among the school's staff, since his appointment. They said he makes them feel valued and they all have the opportunity to contribute to the school's progress. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship takes place in an effort to raise the quality still further. This is an improvement on the previous diocesan inspection. The school's management team and governors are establishing a good self-evaluation process. Areas for school improvement are identified but currently lack a specific target directed towards promoting the Christian vision for Bentley as a successful church school. Staff training for delivery of acts of worship has been identified as an area for development. Governors and staff share the Christian vision for the school. Parents and pupils do too but have yet to be formally surveyed for their views in an effort to raise the profile of this church school still higher. The school and church work closely together. Links between the school and Parochial Church Council (PCC) are good by virtue of governors being members of both. The local Church is used for some school events and as a learning resource. The capacity to make the necessary improvements is good.