

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bures Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Nayland Road
Bures
Suffolk
CO8 5BX

Diocese: St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk LA
Dates of inspection: Wednesday 21st November, 2007
Date of last inspection: November, 2004
School's unique reference number: 124692
Headteacher: Mrs Christine Furniss
Inspector's name and number: Mrs D F Lenton 460

School context

Bures Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is in a small village on the Suffolk/Essex border. The school is smaller than average, and the children who attend come from mainly White British backgrounds. The Parish Church of St Mary's is in the centre of the village and is a short walk from the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bures Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Bures Church of England Primary School is firmly rooted in distinctive Christian values and is extremely effective in the provision it makes for all those within the school community. This is achieved through the strong and committed leadership of the head teacher and the governing body. They are very well supported by a highly committed whole-school team. There is a clear Christian vision for the school in which individuals can develop within an atmosphere of mutual respect and love.

Established strengths

- The quality and depth of the Christian values that underpin all the school achieves.
- The outstanding link between the school, the church and village communities.
- The extremely high expectations of the leadership team, particularly the head teacher, along with a highly committed and motivated staff.

Focus for development

- Develop the role of children to plan and lead Collective Worship.
- Use the children's existing debating skills to draw conclusions about – and record – significant milestones in their spiritual development.
- Provide further opportunities for the local church community to use the school premises.

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

The strong Christian ethos permeates every aspect of the life of the school. The wealth of evidence gained from speaking to children, staff, governors and parents demonstrates that there is a total commitment to the development of the whole child. This is achieved within the context of the Christian concepts of love and forgiveness. The school banner reinforces these characteristics depicting "Love, Care, Share and Forgive" with illustrations from Bible stories. The children displayed an excellent sensitivity to one another. They talked confidently about the importance of forgiveness in their dealings with each other. They spoke highly of their school and said that the school "makes you feel special". The school prayer is a key element underpinning these concepts in which they ask the Father for guidance "in all we do and say".

The school council was keen to express that the school was good at helping people and being kind, forgiving and caring. On the day of the inspection this was effectively seen in action when one child was experiencing some difficulties during playtime.

The staff are excellent role models for the children. They plan and work closely together creating a rich environment in which children can thrive. The school is also very fortunate to have an ordained minister as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA). She acts as a bereavement counsellor as well as supporting staff both pastorally and in their planning for Religious Education.

The Foundation governors provide highly effective support at every level. They have a close working relationship with the school and check and evaluate the school's progress as a church school. They act as a critical friend to the head teacher, providing her with quality support.

The outstanding Ofsted report points to the excellent progress that children make during their time at the school, resulting in high academic achievement. All the parents interviewed were overwhelming in their support for the school and said that their children enjoyed learning and that there was mutual respect among the staff and children. The children have many opportunities to extend their learning through interesting extra-curricular activities, including karate, violin and ukulele clubs. They work hard at supporting many different charities, including Children in Need and Operation Christmas Child. They are extending their "community" through links with schools in Bulgaria and Nigeria, partly through the powerful use of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (S.E.A.L). The head teacher described this as "reaching from where the children are feeling to where others are feeling".

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The very effective Collective Worship is seen as central to the life of the school, and is part of what makes it distinctly Christian. One grandparent had written a letter of thanks to the school in which she made reference to the quality of the specifically Christian act of worship that she had attended. Children see worship as an important time to be quiet, to sing and to pray. They said that prayer was important as it gave them the chance to say "thank you to God" for all that He does for them. They said that it was important to ask God for forgiveness for "the things we do wrong to each other". The children have a sophisticated understanding of the Christian faith and talk freely about the person of Jesus. One child said, "Jesus is real – He had so much power. He died on the cross and then came back to earth. He saved us from our sins." The school's new hall is used very effectively to create a space for worship. The Collective Worship display board is colourful and imaginative. The importance of worshipping God together is illustrated through photographs, pictures and words. There are extremely close ties with both the church of St Mary's and the local Baptist church. Both ministers play an important and active part in the Christian life of the children at school, through leading services and contributing to after-school clubs. The children attend the parish church once a month as part of their Collective Worship and they refer to it as "our church". Collective Worship is well planned and evaluated. One member of staff commented that Collective Worship makes learning more powerful and purposeful, as what happens during this time is referred to at other times during the day. This is reflected in the school's Collective Worship Policy in which themes are specifically included because they are "important features of our everyday life in school." Acts of worship are fully inclusive and the school makes sensitive provision for children who are not of the Anglican tradition. The act of worship observed was good. The children sang enthusiastically to three modern Christian action songs with some children standing at the front directing the actions. The children participated sensitively in a time of reflection and said their school prayer with conviction. The Christian festivals are real highlights in the school's year. The very close link with the local church community is strongly reinforced at these times and many of these festivals are held in St Mary's church itself. The Christingle service, held on a Sunday, is well supported by the children and their parents, for example.

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

The clear vision and leadership of the head teacher is central to the success of the school as a church school. The school is extremely effective because of the strong support that she receives from the whole staff and governing body in realising this vision. On entry to the school visitors are left in no doubt as to the status of the school as a Church of England

Primary School. For example, a wooden cross with the school's Christian Ethos Statement is also clearly displayed. The local clergy along with the Foundation governors are proactive in promoting the vision of the school as a church school. This is an exceptional community in which the school, church and village are very closely meshed. The Chair of Governors described the church as a focal point for the school and community. Equally the church uses the school premises for Sunday School. Foundation governors are also members of the Parochial Church Council. The head teacher attends the local parish church, which prays for the school regularly.

Performance Management works effectively. Although the school is performing exceptionally well the Foundation governors are not complacent. Careful monitoring of Collective Worship takes place and there is a thorough evaluation of the school's performance. The leadership of the school are keen to maintain the excellent standards achieved and, through their reflective and questioning approach, are constantly developing the quality of the educational opportunities available. The role of parents and grandparents is strongly embedded in the life of the school. The Grandparents' Day is very well supported. Parents interviewed said that the school is particularly welcoming and that staff are always available to talk to them about any issues that are concerning them. The quality of the staff's commitment is apparent. Parents are very impressed by the way the vicar and his wife, who is also ordained and is the HLTA, are always available to talk to either themselves or their children, particularly in times of stress. The very close partnership between the local church community and the school is typified by the church's recognition of the value of the work that the HLTA plays in the life of the children. It pays towards extra time for her to spend there fulfilling her role.

November, 2007 Bures Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Bures,
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