

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Capel St Mary Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street,  
Capel St Mary,  
Ipswich,  
Suffolk  
IP9 2EG

#### Diocese: Ipswich & St Edmundsbury

Local authority: Suffolk  
Dates of inspection: 13 January 2009  
Date of last inspection: May 2005  
School's unique reference number: 124749  
Headteacher: Ms Nicky Sirett  
Inspector's name and number: John Rudge

#### School context

This relatively large school attracts children from mainly advantaged families who live in local villages, as well as children from the outskirts of Ipswich and Colchester. Most children on entry are of average ability, and some have learning difficulties, again in line with the national average. A relatively high proportion, however, have a statement of special need. The school is situated close to the middle of the village near the parish church with which there are good links.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Capel St Mary VC Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Children enjoy this school because they feel safe and their teachers make sure they are well cared for and supported. Christian values are celebrated in collective worship, but are less clearly expressed elsewhere in the daily life of the school. The Christian ethos of the school is maintained primarily by the headteacher and senior staff. There is, however, room for other participants, including governors and the children themselves, to share more fully in the distinctive Christian foundation and vision of the school.

#### Established strengths

- The school provides a safe, secure and supportive atmosphere for learning
- Collective worship for the whole school is well-focused and reflects the Christian ethos of the school
- Effective links are maintained with the parish church

#### Focus for development

- Ensuring that the Christian vision and ethos of the school are more clearly and explicitly celebrated in the life of the school as a whole
- Ensuring that the good quality of collective worship extends to all children each day of the week
- Involving a wider range of participants, including staff, children, governors and parents in articulating, expressing and evaluating the school's Christian vision

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

Children and their parents and carers endorse the view that the school provides a helpful, supportive and caring context for learning. The school sees its success as a reflection of its Christian foundation. The Christian ethos of the school, as expressed in the school environment and set out in its promotional literature is, however, implicit rather than clearly stated. As a result, children are broadly aware that they attend a Church of England school, but are less clear about what that means, where it might be exemplified in the daily life of the school and how it affects them as learners. They are aware that RE helps them to understand something about the Christian religion as well as making them familiar with religious diversity. They feel the school provides them with opportunities to express and clarify their own ideas. They also strongly identify the Christian ethos of the school with what happens in collective worship though, again, they are less clear how collective worship relates to the rest of the school's activities. They talk about the school's charitable activities, though not as an aspect of Christian care. The involvement of some children in the Sizewell African Adventure serves to strengthen their awareness of the needs of others and of practical solutions to those needs.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory**

Collective worship forms a significant part of the planned daily life of the school. Whole school gatherings are well-planned and based on current diocesan guidelines. The headteacher takes responsibility for collective worship, effectively separating out the collective worship aspects from other school business. Whole school worship takes place on most days and combines a range of activities including brief enactments by the children, music, storytelling and the use of simple but effective ritual and symbols, such as a candle, which combine to produce a peaceful and reflective atmosphere. Helpfully, prayer is used sensitively to reflect both the Christian foundation of the school and its inclusive, community context. Children sometimes prepare and read their own prayers. Collective worship in smaller groups is less effective and not all children benefit from an opportunity for quiet and reflection. Also, the limited participation of some stakeholders in planning and evaluating collective worship and celebrating the Christian foundation of the school, weakens its overall impact on the children. A potential opportunity to ensure that collective worship is more central to the overall ethos of the school, and to celebrate the impact of Christian values on the life of the school is presented by the school's plans to introduce a new programme of 'values for life' in the near future.

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

The headteacher and her senior staff take the lead in maintaining the Christian ethos of the school, principally through collective worship. They set the tone for the supportive atmosphere of the school and the success of the children in their learning. The school has forged helpful links with the diocese. These are likely to support the school in producing and monitoring a policy for spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Other aspects of leadership are less effective. Foundation governors only rarely exercise their role in raising, discussing and monitoring the spiritual life of the school and its Christian foundation, or in contributing formally and regularly to monitoring and evaluating collective worship. There are also opportunities for both children and their parents to be more directly involved in shaping the school ethos. The school's own self evaluation recognises that these are matters of concern, and there is an awareness that some aspects of the previous Church school inspection are still under discussion, particularly the issue of whether (and how) the Christian character and ethos of the school should be more overt. The school needs to consider this further, but to do so also in the light of the school's responsibility to be inclusive and open to all children. Overall, there is good potential for further development in shaping and celebrating the school's Christian foundation.