

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Castor Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Stocks Hill  
Castor  
Peterborough  
PE5 7AY

#### **Diocese: Peterborough**

Local authority: Peterborough  
Dates of inspection: Thursday 6th March 2008  
Date of last inspection: 10/11 March 2004  
School's unique reference number: 110824  
Headteacher: Mrs Nicola Wynne  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Janet McMurdo

#### **School context**

Castor CE VC Primary school takes pupils from Castor and the surrounding villages. The background from which pupils come is relatively advantaged and the proportion taking a free school meal is well below average. A below average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and none are at the early stages of learning English. The school is situated in the centre of the village of Castor within very close proximity to the church. There are 137 pupils on roll. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is above average (27% of the school) but, currently none of them is funded for a statement of special educational need. The Headteacher was new to her post in September 2007. The deputy was acting head for the term before this; she is also relatively new to the school.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Castor CE VC Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory**

This is a church school where Christian values and principles are at the heart of school life, giving it a distinctive and inclusive ethos. The new Headteacher and foundation governors are aware and communicate verbally, very effectively, their vision for their church school but they have been working together for too short a time for this vision to have permeated all aspects of school life.

#### **Established strengths**

- Castor CE VC Primary is a happy school with a caring ethos underpinned by implicit Christian values.
- The headteacher provides strong Christian leadership for the school and is well supported in this by the foundation governors.
- Governors and parents value and support the recently appointed headteacher.
- There are established links between the church, the school and the community which are being strengthened by the school's new leadership team.

### **Focus for development**

- Put into place a robust system for the monitoring, evaluating and review of the school as a church school.
- Ensure that collective worship is planned and monitored and evaluated to enable it to have maximum impact for all members of the school community.
- Ensure that the church dimension of school life is given due status in the life of the school and an appropriate amount of time within the meeting structure is given to strategically moving this church school forward.

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

The large majority of pupils are happy at school and feel valued, special and safe. They behave in a caring and supportive way towards each other. An identified group of children start their day by participating in the sensory circuit in the hall; this is co-ordinated by a member of staff but managed by year 6 pupils. Parents appreciate this additional support for their children, staff report it helps to ensure a calm start to the day and children are clearly having fun. Staff absence was an issue on the day of the inspection and the way colleagues were keen to support each other clearly demonstrated the distinctive Christian character. The global dimension of the curriculum is currently being highlighted in, many aspects of the school's work. The school was also coming to the end of their participation in 'fair trade fortnight' and pupils were able to talk about the impact of these initiatives both in school and for the world. Religious education has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; they contributed with a good level of understanding to discussions in a year 6 lesson and a satisfactory level in the other observed lesson. However the content of these lessons made it difficult to gauge how much impact the Christian foundation of the school has on pupils' spiritual and moral growth and there was little documented evidence. There is good evidence around the school of symbolism, signs and displays which support the Christian foundation of the school.

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

The Headteacher leads collective worship every week to introduce the theme for the week; this is then followed by class assemblies which build on the theme in a more intimate and relaxed way. All classrooms have a quiet prayer area, of which the children speak very positively. The children showed great reverence when showing me these spaces and could clearly articulate occasions when the prayer spaces had supported children in the school. The children also speak very positively about the weekly collective worship lead by Rector William and of the occasions, at all major festivals and at numerous other times, when they visited the church for services. Rector William is a very strong presence and is reported to have worked tirelessly within the school in recent years when the Christian direction of the school appears to have rested solely with him. On the day of the inspection, the younger children joined in enthusiastically with the 'songs of praise' style collective worship though some of the older pupils needed more encouragement. The Headteacher reported that as a result of recent discussions with pupils the focus for improvements in collective worship were to be, a greater use of visual imagery and less adult talking; this did not yet appear to be having an impact in the collective worship observed. However children were respectful during the prayer said at the start of the worship and entered and left the hall quietly. Children report that the many recently installed Christian artefacts in the hall have increased the impact of

collective worship and helped them to remember that the school is a church school. Children interviewed during the day were able to discuss appropriately why the cross and candle were evident in the worship area in the hall. As yet there does not appear to be established formal, consistent monitoring and evaluating of the acts of worship in place to inform future planning. The collective worship policy has, however, recently been revised to ensure it reflects the importance of collective worship on the life of the school, this work was done by the Headteacher where the previous policy was written by the vicar, an indication of the changes currently being evidenced to in the church dimension of the school since September.

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

It is evident from discussions with parents, governors, the Headteacher, and local clergy and from observation of activities and attitudes in the school there is an assumption that Christian values pervade the school. However, as yet, the Christian nature of the school is not always evident in documentation. The recently appointed Headteacher has strong leadership skills. She has the support of the governors and parents speak highly of her caring nature. The open door policy she has introduced since her arrival at the school has been very favourably received. The introduction of a parents' forum to discuss many aspects of school life has been well received but as yet has not met enough times for there to be a measurable impact. Since the arrival of the new Headteacher systems have been put in place to monitor many aspects of the school's work but as yet these don't focus on the 'school as a church school'. The completion of the toolkit, as an example of the school's self-evaluation, was largely anecdotal, but beginning to form an accurate picture of the school as a church school. It was reported that time constraints did not allow for the systematic gathering of the information. The Headteacher and governors are aware, however, of the need to set systems in place to gather objective evidence to support their judgements and use this evidence to plan the strategic improvement of the school. Governors have informally monitored collective worship and report that Rector William's input and school services in church are a strength. The children from the school, and staff as appropriate, regularly attend family services in the church, contributing by being members of the choir and in other roles as required. All who mentioned it, spoke very highly of the commissioning service held in the autumn to welcome the new Headteacher to the school, this clearly shows the community commitment to the school and the key role it plays in the village. The religious education co-ordinator, though relatively new to her role, exhibits good subject knowledge and has a clear understanding of how to move the subject forward in line with other subjects; she is also supporting the Headteacher as they work to embed the global dimension work of the school. This exciting project which has the potential to enable children at the school to see their role in the wider world is currently being developed by linking the school with other schools in the developing world. This has the potential to enrich the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of the pupils at the school.