

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Dedham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Parson's Field
Dedham
Essex
CO7 6BZ

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex
Dates of inspection: 16th January 2008
Date of last inspection: 26th January 2005
School's unique reference number: 115076
Headteacher: Mrs Heather Tetchner
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Dianne Jackson (552)

School context

The school serves the village of Dedham and its hinterland in the Stour valley. It is a popular school, with approximately one third of the children coming from surrounding villages. The present headteacher has been in post for one term. The post of deputy head remains unfilled for a second term. The school, and its grounds, present an attractive and stimulating environment. A planned extension to the hall, which will improve the facilities for collective worship, has been temporarily deferred pending a county council decision on funding additional facilities.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dedham Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Dedham Primary School is a successful and high achieving school. The foundation governors acknowledge that, although the school's church status has been maintained, there has been insufficient focus upon the developing and enhancing its Christian character. **2**

Established strengths

- A stimulating learning environment and an ethos, which is founded upon Christian values and in which the learners feel valued and special.
- The provision of outstanding personal development.
- The excellent relationships that exist within the school and with the parish of St. Mary's and the local community.
- Good leadership by the headteacher, who has a clear vision and understanding of the characteristics of a church school.

Focus for development

- For staff and governors to engage in dialogue regarding the school's Christian vision, producing a shared view and identifying strategies that will promote and enhance the school's Christian character.
- To plan and deliver collective worship in a way that enables pupils to consistently develop their worship experience and spirituality, is inspirational and embraces the whole community.
- To continue to develop monitoring procedures and evaluative discussion with all stakeholder groups, and utilise the findings to positively impact upon the community's worship experience.
- For staff and governors to explore the nature of spirituality and identify opportunities for developing the community's spiritual well-being.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character is good, with some outstanding aspects, at meeting the needs of all learners.

The school makes excellent provision for the needs of all its learners and its aims acknowledge the uniqueness of individuals. Although Christian values underpin all areas of school life, the school's documentation only makes cursory reference to them. The children feel valued and special, with the majority enjoying school life. High standards of work and behaviour are expected and achieved. The children's achievements are acknowledged and

celebrated; the children cited 'Tetchner's Treasure' as being a particularly popular method. The children's personal development is outstanding and a strength of the school. Parents identify the high standards of behaviour and the ethos, with its emphasis on caring for others as exceptional aspects of the school; some expressing they 'were lucky to be part of this school'. Many children demonstrate good levels of self-esteem, independence and the ability to work collaboratively and this is fostered through the responsibilities afforded by the School Council, Eco Committee and school 'buddies'. The children's comments and writing, e.g. prayers, demonstrate sensitivity for others' feelings and a sense of awe and wonder. The school provides opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth, such as the 'quiet' garden and friendship bench. However, spiritual awareness is not developed in such a systematic way as other aspects of personal development. There is no whole school perception of the concept and strategies for progressively developing the children's spiritual experience are not in place. 2

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory with some good features

Collective worship occupies an important place in the life of the school. The policy is not specific to the needs of Dedham school and its community; nor does it provide guidance on good practice. The school uses a cycle of themes, which includes the major Christian festivals. Planning procedures do not promote the progressive development of the children's worship experience, as the spiritual dimensions and underpinning Christian values are not identified. All teaching staff and the vicar lead acts of worship and visitors, including other local clergy, are used to enrich the children's experience. The observed act of worship, led by the vicar, was well planned and appropriate for the age and needs of the children. Worship took place in an atmosphere of calm and respect, eliciting a very positive response from the learners, who clearly enjoyed the experience. Pupils appreciate the invitation to actively participate. Their comments would suggest that they did not distinguish between an assembly and the act of collective worship. The children know the Lord's Prayer, but have little experience of Anglican traditions or different forms of worship. Monitoring and evaluating worship is in its initial stages and has yet to effectively inform the worship development plan or impact upon the participants' experience. 3

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

The newly appointed headteacher has a clear Christian vision and is making a significant contribution to its success as a church school. She understands the need to actively promote and articulate the implications of its Christian status; for example she includes this aspect in her conversations with new parents and recognises the need to include the church dimension in the induction process for new staff. Until recently developing the school's Christian character and promoting its Christian vision was not high on the governing body's agenda. However, the importance of its church status was recognised in the selection criteria for the head and deputy headteacher appointments. The governors are very supportive and attend school events, including the termly church services. The vicar is a regular school visitor, leading acts of collective worship and meeting with the head to discuss issues related to the church status. The school is receptive to the stakeholders' perceptions of its performance. To date the foundation governors have not formally monitored the school's success in developing its Christian character. Parents recognise that their views are valued and appreciate the school's caring ethos. The staff are good role models and an effective team. Relationships within the school are very good and links with the parish are well established; the school contributes to the parish magazine, attends the Remembrance Day Service and decorates church windows on festive occasions. 2