

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Diss Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School**

The Entry  
Diss, Norfolk  
IP22 4NT

#### **Diocese: Norwich**

Local authority: Norfolk  
Date of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2007  
Date of last inspection: February 2002  
School's unique reference number: 121032  
Headteacher: Mr K Ridgway  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs S Metcalfe, 249

#### **School context**

The 234 pupils, aged from 7 to 11 years, are mainly from white British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. Nearly all have attended Diss County Infants school. Pupils' attainment upon entry to the school is above average, though the percentage with recognised learning needs is also above average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The school is developing close relationships with the parish church.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Diss Junior School as a Church of England school are satisfactory**

The school has a good commitment to raising pupils' spiritual and moral awareness, standards of behaviour and academic achievement. A positive relationship exists between most adults who work in the school, the pupils and their parents. The governing body is starting to act as a critical friend, though the governors' monitoring and evaluation of the school's Christian development is still at an early stage. The school's Anglican foundation is slowly becoming evident in its work, especially in its links with the local church community

#### **Established strengths**

- The care of pupils, their well-being and moral and social development.
- Warm and friendly pupil relationships based on Christian values.
- Good opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and develop their citizenship skills

#### **Focus for development**

- the rate of development of the school's distinctively Christian character
- clear promotion of pupils' spiritual development across the curriculum
- involvement of the Foundation Governors in planning, monitoring and evaluating collective worship
- the role of the incumbent in the life of the school

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

Whatever their religious background, pupils' moral and social development is good, but their spiritual development is inadequate. Pupils' feel that their special successes, including church and extra-curricular activities, are acknowledged well, in celebration assemblies, but these give more support to pupils' moral and social development than to their spiritual. The spiritual environment was seen confined to small, carefully presented, displays of religious artefacts and some pupils' work from their religious education lessons. Outdoors there was little to develop pupils spiritually. There is little evidence of the Christian traditions of care, concern and support in pupil's knowledge of British culture in subjects such as history, rather a focus upon gaining factual information.

The Christian values promoted by the school are best seen in the work in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). Pupils have a good understanding of how privileged they are and are mostly warm and friendly to each other and supporting adults. PSHE develops well pupils' as social and moral beings, especially their ability to empathise with others, both in this country and abroad. This Christian valuing of others is well reflected in the pupils' choice of charities to support through fundraising. Most pupils have a good knowledge of right and wrong and the need to consider the response before taking action. Pupils feel well supported by the Head, the support staff and the majority of the teaching staff. Most conflicts are dealt with well, in a way that is appropriate to pupils' ages. Playground staff give good encouragement to those finding it difficult to play well with others, with opportunities for reflection about behaviour. Relationships between pupils are in the main good. However a small number of older pupils and their parents report that there are still a few instances of bullying in class, which are not dealt with satisfactorily. A lot of good work has been put into developing pupils' independence. For instance, the recently formed Gardening Club is a pupil developed initiative. Those on the School Council are elected and discuss their support to the school.

At present the school does not have formal systems for the governors to monitor the effectiveness of the school's work in this area.

### **The impact of collective worship is satisfactory**

Collective worship is satisfactory at present, making a small, but growing impact upon pupil's spiritual development, and a positive contribution to pupils' moral development. Worship is consistently and recognisably Christian, following the school's Anglican tradition. At present the Head leads whole-school acts of worship but staff and occasionally visitors lead class and key-stage assemblies during the week. To support the work linked to improving pupils' behaviour, acts of worship have been moved to afternoons. This change since the previous inspection has not only altered opportunities for the incumbent to lead worship, but also reduced his pastoral role in the school. He regrets this as he enjoyed his role and thought that pupils and staff valued his work. Older pupils said that they preferred assemblies to be in the morning. As one said:

*"I prefer assemblies in the morning because it gives you something to think about during the day with the chance to discuss issues with teachers at break or during circle time"*

Pupils say they regularly hear stories read directly from the Bible; they enjoy listening and debating what they hear and have the opportunity to read stories and write prayers for class and key-stage assemblies. The current school development plan has pupils' involvement in a wide range of assemblies, including that of the whole school, as an area for development.

Good guidance materials from the Diocese and a positive, clear policy direct the weekly themes and are held in the assembly's diary and record book. In the good, whole-school act of worship seen, the candle, cross and Bible were used well to help pupils focus. Music established a thoughtful atmosphere. The structure was clear, with a quiet period for reflection given.

At present the Foundation Governors, members of the local church and the incumbent are not involved with the planning, delivery and evaluation of whole school, in-school worship, though they do take part in the special services held in the church. Some Governors attend class and key-stage assemblies, but are not involved with the planning of these. They said how pleased they were to see pupils more involved in collective worship, as well as the clear structure and the good Christian focus of the worship they attended. Their good opinions matched the written evaluations by the Head in the assembly record book and pupils' positive comments about collective worship.

### **The leadership and management of the school as a church school is inadequate**

The Head's leadership is satisfactory; he has a strong Christian commitment to the school as a church school, for instance modelling leadership of acts of collective worship and the social and moral work in PSHE. However, his management skills are weaker, as exemplified by the lack of consultation with staff regarding staffing, with liaising with the incumbent over collective worship and in his dealings with parents who have issues with in-class bullying. The school therefore has not progressed as a church school, demonstrating fully the Christian ideal of care and commitment to all, as rapidly as it could have done.

As an active member of the Deanery synod, the Head already had good personal links with most of the local church community; however, there is still some way to go before all school/church links are more than satisfactory. The church gives practical support to school life, with a few parishioners hearing pupils read and supporting school trips and visits. The school does reciprocate where possible, for instance the school singing group participates in church services. However, the incumbent feels that he has been marginalised by the school with his offers to actively support in school rejected. As a Foundation Governor, he feels his role as a supportive but critical friend has been reduced.

Weaknesses in the management of the school have been exacerbated by the lack of a coherent senior-management team due to staff disputes and resignations. Even now there is some feeling that not all the staff are fully committed to the development of the school as a church school as envisaged by the Head and Governors. The lack of an active deputy-head through long-term illness has not helped the school address this issue.

The governing body, especially the Chair, most Foundation Governors and the majority of those interviewed, are supportive of the Head and his vision for the school. The Foundation Governors in particular are just beginning to develop their analytical and evaluative skills, while their monitoring of the school as a church school is at an early stage and still under-developed. They are aware of the direction the Head wishes to take the school as a Christian community, admire his commitment and give good support to his work with the project board and Headteacher mentor. However, they are aware that the rate of progress has been very slow and say they are seeking ways to support the Head to move the school, as a church school, forward at a brisker pace.

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