

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Earl Sterndale Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Earl Sterndale

Buxton

Derbyshire

SK17 0BS

Diocese: Derby

Local authority: Derbyshire

Dates of inspection: 13th - 14th December 2006

Date of last inspection: April 2001

School's unique reference number: 112821

Headteacher: Mr Daniel Holden

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Zita Roscoe no.292

School context

This is a small, rather isolated village school situated in an area of exceptional beauty. The number on roll is 34. Pupils are educated in two classes, KS1 & KS2. The Headteacher has been in post for just 15 months and has a 3.5 day teaching commitment. The limited accommodation prevents great mobility round the school but effective use is made of the available space. Plans to extend the 150 year old building are hampered by its Listed Building status. Pupils are exclusively from white, British backgrounds and are from mixed socio-economic families, many of whom are employed in the local farms and quarry; some are professionals or are self-employed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Earl Sterndale as a Church of England school are good

Christian principles underpin the everyday life of this school. The new headteacher is working well towards fostering the school's Christian ethos. This is a happy school where pupils' views are respected and where they are highly involved in the life of the school. Parents and governors are very supportive and all speak highly of the care and consideration shown to all the children. A culture of co-operation pervades in an environment which encourages pupils to care for each other.

Established strengths

- All staff, governors and other stakeholders work well together as a team and are keen to move the school forward.
- A happy, relaxed atmosphere pervades in the school wherein the pupils play an active part in its life.
- Links with the church are good and a wide variety of Collective Worship experiences are offered by the staff, vicar and other outside agencies.
- Symbols and prayers displayed round the school proclaim its Christian identity.

Focus for development

- Build on the support received from the Diocese by including training for RE and Collective Worship in the school's Development Plan.
- Review the Collective Worship policy, ensuring that the good practice which exists is included and emphasise the Anglican nature of the school.
- Follow up plans to visit places of worship of other faiths
- In the school's brochure, include a separate statement about Collective Worship.

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

The Toolkit claims that a family atmosphere pervades. This was evident during the inspection. Pupils are encouraged to offer their own ideas, thoughts and concerns and many of their recommendations are acted upon. Positive behaviour is promoted through a system of rewards in recognition of achievement. Confident, friendly and polite pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. As witnessed in the playground, pupils are adept at organising their own games. These games include all children of all ages. All needs of the children are met – small numbers enable individual attention and particular sensitivity is shown towards a child who has problems. Good relationships exist between pupils and staff. Thoughtfulness of each other's needs which exists in this school was demonstrated when a child brought in a box of chocolates for all the children. One child is allergic to chocolate, so an orange was included for this child. Links with local schools are good and the wider community is recognised through charitable fund raising.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good

The joint planning of RE and Collective Worship, enabled by access to some good resources, shows that a wide variety of acts of worship is experienced by the pupils. Outside agencies, which include the vicar and the local Anglican Assembly Team, are particularly concerned with the Anglican tradition in their planning. The Christian year is recognised both through school worship and in the church and the children are able to talk confidently about the major Christian festivals. Pupils participate well in an atmosphere which includes a focus and appropriate entry music. A confident pupil-led worship was well planned and indicated that they were aware of the significant spiritual dimension to their experiences of worship. The school prayer is said as are the prayers written by children and placed in the Prayer Box. Prayers are also said at the beginning and end of meal times and the end of each day. They demonstrate a good knowledge of Bible stories and can explain how the teachings of Jesus reflect upon their own lives. Some of the responses made by the children are:- "Worship makes you think."
"Parables are stories Jesus told with a moral to them."
"We use the Prayer Box to help us when we feel down or to pray for someone."
The careful planning of RE and its good delivery often interlinks with worship and encourages the pupils to reflect and respond.

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

The comparatively new headteacher, the staff and governors share the same vision for the school. This is built on Christian values of reconciliation, understanding, forgiveness and understanding. Parents are encouraged to take part in the life of the school through its open-door policy and through questionnaires. Changes, such as more regular newsletters, have been made because of the answers given in these questionnaires. All parents interviewed spoke highly of the care shown to their children and of the happy atmosphere which exists. Links with the church and local community are strong. In spite of having responsibility for other churches and schools, the vicar plays an active role in supporting Earl Sterndale, as do the Foundation Governors and other church agencies. Team work underpins the philosophy of this school.