

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Earsham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Road

Earsham

Bungay

Suffolk

NR35 2 TF

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 14 March 2008

Date of last inspection: 11 June 2004

School's unique reference number: 121114

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Payne

Inspector's name and number: Betty Barratt 203

School context

Earsham Church of England School serves the village of Earsham and the surrounding area. Many parents from outside the village choose to send their children to the school because of its Christian character. Most of the 69 pupils are of White British heritage with a few coming from traveller families when they are in the area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. The school is about five minutes walk from the parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Earsham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The strong Christian ethos which permeates the school inspires excellent relationships and very positive values and attitudes to teaching and learning. Pupils thrive in a happy, relaxed and secure environment. They respond very well to the high expectations for their achievement and behaviour, and their care and consideration of one another. Their confidence and self-esteem are boosted by encouragement and reward. Support for their spiritual development is exceptionally strong. Adults are excellent role models.

Established strengths

- The deep commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to promoting the distinctive Christian character of the school.
- The Christian principles which are lived out in practice by the whole school community
- The outstanding teaching in religious education which strongly supports the achievement of the school's Christian vision
- The excellent working partnership with the parish church and its congregation

Focus for development

- Ensure that parents and pupils are involved in formal procedures for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the school's Christian vision.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all pupils

The school's very strong Christian ethos results in all pupils being helped to flourish as individuals and achieve their best. Pupils feel valued and secure in a warm and welcoming environment. Excellent relationships, underpinned by shared Christian values, result in happy, articulate and impressively mature young people. All staff work as a team to ensure that pupils' efforts and achievement are rewarded. Midday assistants, for example, record incidents of good behaviour in the Gold Book, and choose pupils to join the headteacher for lunch at the Gold Table in recognition of their courtesy and good manners. Reward systems ensure that no one is left out. All pupils are named in turn as the special person for the day,

and pupils are very proud when their achievements are recognised in the merit assemblies in the parish church. Pupils relish joining the many out of lesson activities including making Easter eggs, learning circus skills, sport, and the after school club run by the church. They appreciate the opportunities they have to take responsibility and contribute their ideas, for example, as playground leaders and class representatives. The topics which concern them reflect their care and consideration for others. Class representatives are currently discussing safety issues relating to bicycles, and the feasibility of installing ramps and toilet facilities for the disabled. Concern for others is also shown in their wide ranging fund raising activities which include the shoe box appeal for Romanian children. Traveller children and their families are welcomed and very well supported. Parents value the way the school fosters kindness and encourages pupils to treat other people as Jesus would.

The rich and varied learning experiences provide outstanding support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual development is further supported by Christian symbols throughout the school, the prayer boxes, lively display, and the friendship and two memorial benches in the playground. Pupils are eager to explain the significance of the benches, pointing out that the first are in memory of two teachers who died recently, and that the second helps to ensure that no one is lonely during break times.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school. All pupils and adults participate fully, and services in the parish church are well attended by parents, grandparents and governors. Much worship takes place in church including the celebration of the major Christian festivals. Worship is carefully planned to link themes based on Bible stories, to situations in pupils' daily lives. All teachers lead worship and pupils help to prepare for assemblies through setting up the projector and organising the music. The bright banner in the school resource centre, where school assemblies take place, with its uplifting message 'Thank you Lord for This Fine Day' provides a clear reminder of the Christian nature of worship.

Pupils enjoy collective worship listening attentively, joining reverently in prayer and singing with enjoyment. During the inspection they relished the two-part singing of 'Rejoice in the Lord Always', which was conducted with the help of a pupil. Pupils especially enjoy the participation encouraged by the members of the parish church ministry team who lead worship on Wednesdays. Collective worship encourages them to reflect and engage with Christian values and prayer in their own lives. Pupils know the Lord's Prayer and learn a weekly prayer. Grace, often accompanied by sign language, is said daily. Pupils write their own prayers, sharing them with their class, and placing them in the class prayer box. Pupils enjoy church services and were looking forward to the celebration of Easter in church. They have good understanding of Bible stories and important aspects of the Anglican faith. For instance, they readily identified the major Christian festivals, and had good understanding of the significance and importance of Lent, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. They are also developing an understanding of Anglican practice. They are able to name the main features of the church building, understand the importance of the cross and candles on the altar, and recognise Holy Communion as an important service.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education makes an outstanding contribution to promoting the Christian character of the school and to supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Lessons are well planned to provide interesting, well timed activities designed to ensure that all pupils are thoroughly involved. Learning is fun and relevant to pupils' daily lives. All work hard and are keen to do their best. Pupils in Class 1 thoroughly enjoyed the role play which helped them to understand the events surrounding Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. They responded extremely well to the teacher's challenging 'I Wonder' questions which prompted them to explore and reflect on the significance of the occasion. Similarly, the enactment of the Last Supper by pupils in Class 2 helped them to understand the links with Holy Communion services. Class 3 pupils showed an excellent understanding of how washing the feet of the disciples by Jesus set an example of the importance of serving others. Many related Jesus' action to the annual distribution of Maundy money by the Queen.

Pupils make excellent progress and work very well together, listening to, and respecting each other's views. Their learning is strongly supported by the teachers' knowledgeable and clear presentations, and creative use of interactive white boards. Learning was reinforced in the Class 2 lesson by pupils being asked to choose the digital photographs of activities during the lesson which were most helpful in recording their learning. Excellent classroom relationships result in a very positive learning ethos.

Learning is enriched by the half-termly cross curricular Christian festival days such as the recent Lent Project Day, and the many opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion. Pupils' progress is tracked closely and those needing additional help are very well supported.

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

The headteacher's dedication to promoting the school's Christian vision, permeates the whole school. The school's Christian character is clearly expressed in its mission statement and aims, and staff are made fully aware of the Christian nature of the school at the time of their appointment. Staff feel highly valued and are deeply committed to the achievement of the vision for the school as a church school. They are excellent role models in the way their values are reflected in their daily lives. They share strong beliefs and commitment to supporting the children and their families. One teacher described the school as 'nurturing school'. The school's admission policy is fully inclusive, and the school's Christian character is made clear to all families.

The foundation governors, who include the local priest, have a clear view of their role, and are deeply committed to promoting the school's distinctive Christian character. They are well supported by the team Rector, and work closely with the school as critical friends, questioning and identifying areas to be further developed. There is a strong working partnership with the parish church and its congregation, and with the diocese and the village of Earsham. Members of the local team of Anglican clergy play a key role in leading worship, and in supporting school events. The school shares its work with the church congregation through displays in church, performing nativity plays and children presenting their recent project work. In the wider community, the school plays an important part in events such as the Village Festival. Diocesan staff give much appreciated support especially at times of need and sadness for example, during recent periods of illness and bereavement.

Governors and staff are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's progress as a church school. All contributed for instance, to the SIAS School Self Evaluation. However, while full account is taken of the views of parents and pupils in evaluating the work of the school generally, they are not specifically involved in the formal evaluation of its effectiveness as a church school.