

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Fairhaven Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Road,
South Walsham
Norwich
Norfolk
NR13 6DZ

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk
Dates of inspection: 11th June 2007
Date of last inspection: 31st March-1st April 2003
School's unique reference number: 121150
Headteacher: Ms Melodie Fearn
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Kathryn Wright (436)

School context

Fairhaven School has 97 pupils on roll who come from the village of South Walsham and the surrounding area. Pupils are almost all from families of White British backgrounds and there are more girls than boys. There have been a number of significant staff changes since the last inspection. The headteacher has been in post since September 2005. Following a lengthy interregnum the current rector took up his position in October 2006 and there are a number of new members on the governing body.

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

The school has a distinctive Christian ethos which permeates the life of the school. Staff, children, parents and governors are all valued as 'partners in learning'. This has been nurtured by the current headteacher who has transformed the school into one that is characterised by a sense of community spirit and openness. The school's self evaluation is secure, honest and accurate. A comprehensive action plan has been developed to support further improvement in relation to church school issues.

Established strengths

- The leadership and vision of the headteacher and the foundation governors
- The strong links with the church and local community
- The emphasis on teamwork and co-operation
- The contribution of collective worship and RE to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children

Focus for development

- Formalise regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of collective worship, church school distinctiveness and religious education
- Implement the new spiritual, moral, social and cultural policy through the school
- Ensure that religious education is included in the school focus on assessment for learning

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

The ethos of the school is clearly rooted in Christian values. This is demonstrated through the school aims which are displayed throughout the school and in the new mission statement being written with staff and children. The latter highlights the Christian foundation of the school and encourages the children to reflect on life, search for meaning and fulfil their potential as human beings. There is a strong emphasis on the 'whole child' and treating every child as an individual. The children describe their school as 'fantastic', 'open', 'friendly' and

'exciting'. The implementation of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) has reinforced the children's understanding of the importance of truth, justice and self esteem. Relationships are characterised by caring and forgiving attitudes, and older children support younger ones in the playground.

The pupil voice is valued highly. The school council meets regularly and has had input into school improvement, including the behaviour policy and purchasing of new play equipment. Children are given responsibilities around the school including as team captains and play leaders. The children regard all staff as approachable and the headteacher encourages an 'Open Door Policy'.

The school environment is utilized well to promote spiritual development, although reference to the local church is limited. There are prayers from around the world located in the hall and religious education (RE) displays including Noah's Ark and Hindu Sacred Texts. Each classroom has the school prayer displayed, and some classes say their own prayers before lunch each day. There are opportunities for children to reflect on their learning, and a space is available for quiet thinking time. In one lesson observed, children were given an opportunity to listen to a mantra and reflect on it. In addition, reception children were able to talk about what rainbows meant to them. For example, one child said that rainbows made her think about 'far away lands'. A bible club, run by the rector's wife, makes a significant contribution to the children's spiritual development. Children talked confidently about the different fruits of the spirit and the meaning of Pentecost which they had learnt about in the club.

The school actively promotes an attitude of care and concern for the wider community. The children fundraise throughout the year for a variety of charities including Operation Christmas Child, Water Aid Day and the Bishop's Lent Appeal. Many of these events are initiated by the children. This has enabled the children to understand more about the world in which they live including cultural and social diversity. In addition, children's cultural development was enhanced through a visit and workshop by Grassroots from Zimbabwe.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Collective worship is regarded as an essential part of school life. The children value it highly saying that they enjoy the whole school coming together and being able to talk to God. All teaching staff lead an act of worship on a weekly basis. The recently reviewed collective worship policy makes explicit reference to the school's Christian foundation and the importance of links with the local churches and rector.

The planning and recording of collective worship is done effectively by the headteacher. There are strong Christian themes throughout the year, with an emphasis on bible stories and Christian festivals. The Anglican tradition of the school is actively promoted. In an act of worship observed the children recited the Lord's Prayer enthusiastically. Acts of worship are regularly held in the church at festival times and organised by the children. The rector leads worship once a fortnight and children speak very positively about these occasions. Parents are invited to acts of worship once a term and these are well attended.

Most of the acts of worship meet the needs of all the learners by using visual aids, objects and encouraging children to participate. There is a dedicated focal point with a cross and candle for children to look at. The children sing enthusiastically and reflect thoughtfully. However, in the act of worship observed about the conversion of Saul some of the younger children were not engaged in the storytelling and did not understand the meaning behind it.

The impact of collective worship is evident in the lives of pupils. Each act of worship is linked to a 'social target' which the children are encouraged to focus on and which is sometimes developed thorough personal, social and emotional education (PSE). For example, the theme of 'boldness' was explored through singing in collective worship and then in a PSE lesson.

Whilst monitoring and evaluation takes place through informal discussion with foundation governors, there are currently no formalised procedures in place to ensure the school's worship is true to its Christian foundation and impacting on the lives of the children.

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

The headteacher provides strong Christian leadership and is wholeheartedly supported by the foundation governors. She enthusiastically conveys her vision for the school to governors, staff, parents and children, and has created a sense of ownership and team spirit. The school aims and new mission statement are explicitly Christian. The foundation governors are actively involved in many aspects of school life and most have specific responsibilities relating to school improvement. In addition, they provide prayer support and are developing closer links with the PCC. Whilst the foundation governors encourage and challenge the headteacher in relation to church school issues, there is currently no formal monitoring of evaluation of the school as a church school.

There are good spiritual development opportunities for staff. For example an INSET day was held at the Cathedral on symbolic artwork which was described by one teacher as 'uplifting' and by another as 'being part of the wider church family'. In addition, teachers spoke of the benefits of attending collective worship in the local church, describing it as 'calming' and 'peaceful'. Recruitment and induction procedures ensure that all new staff are aware of the Christian nature of the school and how they may contribute to the development of the ethos.

The headteacher has worked tirelessly since her appointment to foster an outstanding partnership with parents and the wider community. The new school website provides an impressive insight into the life of the school, including links to the local churches and web pages created by the children. The school has provided courses for the community and organised events such as Carol Singing and a French Evening. Parents speak positively about all aspects of the school.

The school and church provide mutual support, particularly since the recent arrival of the new rector. The school promotes events at the church such as confirmation classes and services, and the church publicises school news through its monthly parish magazine. The rector is attending training on collective worship and how to enhance visits to the church to support his role with the school.

The effectiveness of religious education is good.

Religious Education has a strong place within the curriculum. The updated policy clearly refers to the school's trust deed and the new Norfolk Agreed Syllabus. There is an excellent balance in planning and practice between the two attainment targets. Children in Key Stage Two are able to talk about 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion. In Key Stage One children talked about the importance of the story of Noah and what it meant to them.

Lessons are planned thoroughly by individual teachers, however there is a lack of consistency regarding how many learning objectives are given to the children in each lesson. The implementation of assessment for learning in RE is at an early stage of development. In one class very good practice was observed when the teacher revisited learning objectives and children decided if they had achieved them or not. In some classes however, there was little evidence of the marking of pupils work and no comments were given for individual improvement. Some children could talk confidently about how well they were doing in RE, but some were unaware whether they were making progress in the subject or not.

Most children achieve well by the end of Key Stage Two, with some achieving beyond the expectations in the Agreed Syllabus. In two of the three lessons observed, the teachers provided a high level of challenge and enabled children to think deeply about the impact of religion on the lives of believers.

Children have positive attitudes towards the subject. They enjoy learning about different religions and expressing their own opinions. Children are well motivated and take part in a variety of different learning activities including drama, creating posters and discussion. Children are encouraged to interpret religions and think about them from a range of perspectives. For example, in a Key Stage One lesson children were asked to suggest their own ideas and questions about images from the Jewish faith. In a Key Two lesson about

Hinduism children were asked to consider what characteristics God might have if he came as an avatar to the world today.

RE clearly promotes the distinctive Christian Character of the school through the emphasis on the Christian Faith in the schemes of work. In addition, the rector takes part in lessons on a regular basis. For example he showed the reception children how to make Palm Crosses at Easter and shared his faith and experiences with Key Stage Two children in a question and answer session.

SIAS Report June 2007 Fairhaven C of E (VA) School, School Road, South Walsham, Norwich, Norfolk NR13 6DZ.