

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Fountains Earth, Lofthouse Church of England Endowed Primary School

Lofthouse
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG3 5RZ

Diocese: Ripon and Leeds

Local authority: North Yorkshire
Dates of inspection: 13 October 2006
Date of last inspection: 22 February 2002
School's unique reference number: 121561
Headteacher: Mrs Candida Rogers
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Sharon Artley (NS 131)

School context

Fountains Earth Lofthouse is a very small Church of England school set in an isolated rural location in Upper Nidderdale – an area of outstanding natural beauty. There are currently 17 pupils on roll with a ratio of two-thirds girls to one-third boys. Pupils are drawn from the two local communities. All pupils are white British with English as their first language. A new headteacher was appointed at the beginning of 2006.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Fountains Earth Lofthouse as a Church of England school are good with some outstanding features.

All staff work together to build on the strong Christian values which are at the foundations of the school. The impact of this is seen in the respect and exemplary behaviour shown by all pupils. The new headteacher has already established many systems for school improvement and is currently working with the governors to establish appropriate monitoring and evaluation procedures for the Christian dimensions of school life.

Established strengths

- The outstanding quality of relationships within the whole school community exemplified by Christian values, creating a secure and loving learning environment
- The value placed on the uniqueness of each individual
- The way in which school, church and the whole community are woven together as one fabric, each mutually supportive and strengthening of the other strands
- The commitment to providing a broad curriculum with many enrichment activities which encourage and nurture the differing abilities and interests of pupils

Focus for development

- With all stakeholders, review the school's mission statement and other key policy documents to more explicitly reflect the strength of the school's Christian ethos.
- Access appropriate training for Foundation Governors to develop a strategy to monitor and evaluate the school's Christian foundation
- Explore ways to make more visible the Christian values embedded in the life of the school.

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

Learners readily express their views about feeling valued and special. They feel cared for and know they can go to anyone for help if they have a problem. Pupils treasure this small and special community. Following a visit to an urban primary school, pupils made comparisons and were able to identify the special qualities of their own school. This valuable link extends

the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the curriculum giving learners insights into, and a greater understanding of, other faiths and cultures. A changing display in the RE corner in one classroom further develops this understanding. The school cook often uses themes such as a French or German day to prepare meals with a cultural flavour. Learners know that this is a church school and can distinguish some features which make it so, for example, the use of a worship table and the symbolism of the cross and candle. Parents are overwhelming in their praise for the school and the strength of relationships, describing it as a family. A key feature for them is that the school and the community are one and indivisible. They expressed how every child is treated with equality and welcome the open invitation to visit the school whenever they wish. They particularly enjoy opportunities to attend 'achievement assemblies'. Parents feel confident about speaking to any member of staff if there is an issue and know that it will be dealt with rapidly and effectively. There are many occasions to think of others through, for example, regular charitable events for UNICEF and the Air Ambulance. Pupils know why it is important to help others. Foundation and Key Stage 1 pupils were able to express reasons for sharing and were involved in practical applications of this. Following a community competition to design a new school logo, pupils could explain the ideas behind the symbols and why, using the church or a cross, is important in a church school. The School Council explained its role in assisting the school in deciding on the final design and will make a presentation to governors. An international environmental project is engaging the pupils in observing and gathering data from the local area. Findings can be compared over the internet with other project schools, further developing pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural understanding.

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

A Christian themed termly plan for Collective Worship is produced by the headteacher. Pupils are actively involved in discussion by the Collective Worship leader, answering questions and responding positively. They enjoy singing worship songs and hymns from the new book introduced by the headteacher. In the observed act of Collective Worship, the vicar engaged all the children on a theme of communicating with God and knew each child by name. At the point where pupils were asked to think of someone who might need prayer, the candle was effectively used as a focus for a few moments of quiet, creating a powerful stillness. In addition to the worship table, harvest prayers from a recent service and pupils' posters explaining the Lord's Prayer formed a display. The celebration of key festivals throughout the Christian year faithfully upholds the school's Anglican status. Worship is integral to the life of the school. Pupils show an understanding of what prayer is and why Christians pray. They recite prayers at lunch and the end of school. They actively participate in a variety of church services throughout the year, during the school day and on Sundays. A particular highlight is when the whole school walks a mile uphill to the church in the next village, for an Ascension Day service. Although the effectiveness of Collective Worship is not systematically evaluated this is currently under review.

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

The headteacher continues to strengthen the school's calm and caring atmosphere and all staff feel valued. Views are sought from stakeholders and used to inform and evaluate policy and practice. Parents are regularly informed by newsletters of pupils' achievements and events in the life of the school. The school is currently investigating setting up a website to include news, successes and policy documents. The 'open door approach' has created a culture where parents feel all aspects of the school are accessible. The school is involved in the ecumenical partnership of the churches in the dale. The recent Harvest Festival, at which all pupils participated, was held in the Methodist chapel. A part time member of staff also working with the ecumenical project leads Collective Worship in the school along with Christian activities in the community. These include a drop-in centre for Year 6 pupils, holiday clubs and termly Christian themed parties. The school improvement plan and other important policy documents do not currently include explicit statements or objectives regarding the school's distinctive Christian character. This is evident in the life of the school, but needs to be made explicit in documentation. All governors are very supportive, but foundation governors currently do not have a developed understanding of their roles and responsibilities for the school as a church school. Reports from governors' meetings to the PCC are not

formalised, and tend to be about the progress of the school or specific events, rather than having a focus on its Anglican status. At present, there is no regular and specific agenda item at governors' meetings with regard to the school as a Church of England school. Foundation Governors are proud of the school's Christian foundation and recognise the need to strengthen their monitoring and evaluative role.

SIAS report October 2006 Fountains Earth Lofthouse HG3 5RZ