

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

### **Framlingham Sir Robert Hitcham's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Framlingham,  
Suffolk  
IP13 9EP

#### **Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

Local authority: Suffolk

Dates of inspection: 11 and 12 June 2008

Date of last inspection: February 2005

School's unique reference number: 124775

Headteacher: Mrs J. Elphick

Inspector's name and number: Betty Barratt 203

### **School context**

The school is larger than most primary schools. Pupils come from Framlingham and five surrounding villages. Almost all are White British, a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small number are at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language. The attainment of most pupils on entry is slightly below that expected for their age, and the percentage identified with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The parish church is about five minutes walk away.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Framlingham Sir Robert Hitcham's Church of England School as a Church of England School are outstanding**

The very 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. Pupils' spiritual development is strongly promoted by rich and varied opportunities for worship, and the close links with the Rector and parish church.

### **Established strengths**

- The deep commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to promoting a strong Christian vision for the school
- The Christian principles which are lived out by the whole community
- The excellent support for pupils' achievement and well-being
- The extremely close links with the parish church and local community

### **Focus for development**

- Ensure that school self evaluation procedures specifically focus on the achievement of the school's Christian vision

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

The school's very strong Christian ethos enables all pupils to thrive and achieve their best. They feel valued and secure in a warm, welcoming and orderly environment. The excellent relationships between them and their teachers, and between adults, enable all to thrive. Children are happy, articulate, very well-behaved, and caring of one another. They are proud

of their school and relish joining its wide-ranging activities, and have great fun at the Hitcham Holy Horrors club run in partnership with the church. They also have excellent opportunities to learn about other cultures through links with schools in Zululand, Ethiopia and India, and the annual multi-cultural week which had an Asian theme this year.

The school is strongly inclusive with pupils of all abilities and backgrounds being very well supported and warmly welcomed. Pupils confidence is boosted by the recognition and celebration of their achievements for example, at the weekly Celebration Assemblies. Pupils value the many opportunities they have to take responsibility through, for example, the School Council. They are proud of the contribution their ideas make for example, to improved care for playground equipment, and their support for charities. Those met during the inspection were especially proud of the support for Children in Need, and for the homeless as part of the annual Harvest Festival. In the local community, the school sings at a nursing home, and leads Maypole dancing at fetes and other events. The rich and varied learning experiences provide outstanding support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual development is further supported by the vibrant and attractive, displays throughout the school which include much high quality work in religious education, and by the specially designed outside areas, such as the Gilder Garden and willow arch, which encourages quiet reflection. The presence of crosses, candles, prayer books and other articles of faith, throughout the school are constant reminders of the school's close partnership with the church.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective Worship is very important in the life of the school. The headteacher and governors are committed to providing varied and rich worship. Evaluation of its effectiveness takes full account of pupils' views. The predominately Christian themes, worship table, cross and candles in the school hall, are clear reminders of the Christian nature of worship. Worship in school is closely interrelated with that of the parish church. Pupils regularly visit the church, and services celebrating the major Christian festivals and other key events are shared between school and church. In the Easter term 2008 pupils attended church services celebrating Mothering Sunday and preparing for Easter. The rector and other clergy play a significant part in leading worship. During the inspection the rector led worship which was very lively and fully involved pupils in reading, prayer and singing, and ended with God's blessing. Worship is enhanced by the wide range of people who lead it. These include the headteacher and all staff, and visitors from local churches and the wider community.

Pupils enjoy worship especially when it is shared with their parents for example, at the Celebration Assemblies. They listen attentively, join reverently in prayer, and sing with enjoyment. Their energetic singing of 'Jesus never turned any one away' during the inspection, clearly reflected their spirituality. Prayer is very important in the life of the school. Pupils write and share prayers, and say the Lord's Prayer confidently. Staff value opportunities for prayer at the beginning of the day.

Pupils relate very well to the rector. They enjoy church services and learning about Anglican faith and practices. Those met spoke about the importance of belief in God and the Holy Spirit, and Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. They understood the role of the rector and the importance of Baptism and the Eucharist. Assemblies focusing on the Anglican faith in other parts of the world help them to understand shared Christian beliefs and different traditions of worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Much of the teaching and learning in religious education is outstanding. In the lessons observed, pupils responded very well to the teachers' high expectations and innovative approaches. Learning was exciting, inspiring pupils to explore the faith and practices in the Church of England, and to make comparisons with other denominations and faiths. Pupils in the Reception class were very excited when asked to suggest ways in which they could help with the running of the church. Their practical ideas reflected a remarkably good understanding of the daily life and work of the church. Those in Years 1 and 2, responded equally well to the teacher's challenge for them to recall their recent visit to the parish church by identifying items they had seen, and describing their use in worship. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 built very well on to their recent interviews with the rector and deacon in describing the

differences in their roles. In all lessons pupils were fully involved and worked with pride. Excellent relationships and behaviour enabled pupils to make very good progress.

Religious education is regarded as being of great importance. The link governor and other governors take an active role in promoting religious education. They take part in lessons and other activities, and assist with planning and monitoring. Religious education makes an important contribution to promoting the Christian character of the school, and to supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The co-ordinator has excellent subject expertise which she keeps up-to date through attending wide-ranging courses. She supports her colleagues very well, running 'surgeries' to help individual teachers. Skilled planning enables pupils to learn about a wide range of denominations and faiths. Those in Years 4 and 5 were fascinated to learn about the importance of the gurdwara in Sikh worship, and those in Years 1 and 2 were looking forward to their visit to the local Roman Catholic church.

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

The head teacher's dedication to promoting the school's Christian character permeates the whole school. The prominently displayed spiritual image in the entrance immediately establishes the school's Christian identity as do the other Christian symbols in the hall, corridors and classrooms. The school's Christian purpose is clearly reflected on its website, and in its aims and values. Staff appointments are guided by the need to ensure that these are upheld by those new to the school. Staff 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. The school's admission policy is fully inclusive, and the Christian message made available to all families. The governing body led by the rector, are deeply committed to promoting the school's distinctive Christian character, and the foundation governors have a very clear view of their role. All are actively involved in the life and worship of local churches. Governors' meetings always open with a prayer. Governors, staff and parents are involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's overall effectiveness, and the school's evaluation of its effectiveness as a Church of England school in preparation for the inspection was accurate. However, the achievement of the school's Christian vision is not specifically monitored formally as part of the school's procedures for self evaluation and development planning.

The links with the parish church and local community are extremely strong. There is a very effective working partnership between school and parish church. The school supports church services, events and fundraising such as that for the repair of the tower, and shares resources with the church. In turn, the church makes a powerful contribution to pupils' learning in many areas of the curriculum. There are also very effective partnerships with churches of other denominations with representatives of these churches regularly leading school worship, and participating in celebrations and other events. The school is of central importance in the local community forging links with the town council through councillors leading worship and taking part in very many community events.