

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Gislingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Broadfield Road,
Gislingham,
Eye
IP23 8HX

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

LA: Suffolk

Dates of Inspection: 16th July 2007

Date of Previous Inspection: 2002

Unique Reference Number: 124753

Headteacher: Mr C Dyson

Inspector's Name and Number: Mr E Green 267

School context

Gislingham is a smaller than average Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary school situated about five miles to the west of Eye. The school caters for 87 pupils aged 4 to 11; there are currently four classes. Pupils attending the school come almost entirely from the village of Gislingham. All the pupils are White British. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average but there are some very able pupils and a smaller than average but significant number with learning difficulties. The school is part of a 'soft federation' with a neighbouring school.

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

The ethos of Gislingham Church of England School is rooted in Christian values and these values are evident in all aspects of school life. There is good leadership from the headteacher and governors and the school works very well with the parish church and local community. There is a very good understanding of the role of a church school in village life.

Established Strengths

- A caring ethos, which values each individual child and which is based on Christian Values
- The active leading role the school takes in the life of the village.
- The effective leadership of headteacher and governors

Focus for Development

- To define a clear role for the foundation governors in the newly formed 'soft federation' with the neighbouring school.
- To write a new collective worship policy
- To involve the pupils more in the leading and planning of collective worship.

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

Through good teaching and an ethos built on Christian values, pupils at Gislingham learn well and make good progress in a secure, friendly and supportive learning environment. They show good self confidence and speak of feeling valued and being able to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Further, through the implementation of the school's aims they understand, for example, the importance of being responsible for their own actions and how their actions impact upon others. School and individual achievements are celebrated through 'Celebration Assemblies'. For pupils in need of additional support there is a system of individual education plans and good use of support staff. Good relationships, characterised by Christian values such as care, concern, forgiveness, respect and love exist throughout the school and all members of the school community play an important role in the maintaining of these values. The pupils talk positively of these Christian

values and how these can be integrated into school life, through, for example, the 'pals' scheme'. The views of pupils are taken into account through the school council which meets with the headteacher on a regular basis. The school council were, this term, involved in the appointment of the new headteacher – they interviewed the candidates and were invited to feed back to governors. Commitment to Christian values in action has led to the school raising money for charities like Comic Relief and supporting a small school in Tanzania. The school encourages a healthy lifestyle through a focus on diet and exercise. These healthy aims are supported through the provision of extra curricular activities such as a football club.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship plays an important role in the life of the school; it is well planned and organised and records are kept – it is acknowledged that the worship policy does now need updating. Pupils are involved in some of the worship, for example, through drama and being responsible for the operation of the CD player. Plans are being made for greater pupil participation in worship. Pupils readily join in the times of worship and there is time for music, reflection, singing and prayer. Pupils talk positively about their worship time and readily recall stories they have heard – there is a good positive attitude within the school towards the daily act of worship. Class assemblies are held each term and these are very well attended by parents and friends. Most of the staff are involved in the leading of worship. The vicar (who stays on in school after worship time to visit different classes) and Methodist minister regularly lead worship in school; they follow the worship scheme as set but also ensure that all the major Christian festivals are celebrated. Palm crosses are distributed prior to Easter and the school takes part in a large carol concert held at the United Reformed Church in Stowmarket. Use is made of the Lord's Prayer and the school is looking to write and use its own school prayer. Grace is said each day before lunch.

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

There is a good and strong working relationship between the headteacher, the Chair of Governors and the Foundation Governor (there is currently a vacancy for one Foundation Governor) – this should be filled as soon as possible particularly in the light of the need to clarify the role of the Foundation Governors. This good working relationship leads to effective leadership of the school as a Church School. The Foundation Governor ensures that good links between church and school are maintained by, for example, ensuring that she visits the school at least once a week and reporting back at each Parochial Church Council. An annual report is also given by the Chair of Governors to the Parish Council. The school is involved in Church and Community events, for example, the school takes part in the Church Flower Festival and the community organised treasure hunt and sports day. The school is already used as a base for the joint school community photocopier and there are plans to develop the school further so that it can become a base for other activities, such as, a homework club. Governors are aware of the school's Christian foundation and purpose, which are referred to in the school prospectus but acknowledge that there is nothing in the entrance area that indicates that Gislingham is a church school. The post of headteacher has recently been advertised and filled – it was made clear that Gislingham is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School and what the expectations were of the successful candidate. The school has an active and very supportive 'Friends Association'. The school has in place a performance management scheme for staff and a well-being programme.

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