

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Great Whelnetham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Great Whelnetham
Bury St. Edmunds
Suffolk
IP30 0UA

Diocese: St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Local Authority: Suffolk
Date of inspection: 18th March 2008
Date of last inspection: November 2003
School's unique reference number: 124700
Headteacher: Mrs Chris Lawson
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Marion Betts 220

School context

Great Whelnetham School is a smaller than average primary school for pupils aged 4 to 9 years. It serves the rural village of Great Whelnetham and surrounding villages. It is situated next to the parish church which is closed at present due to its unsafe structure. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. There has recently been a high proportion of staff turnover including the appointment of a new headteacher two terms ago.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

A clear and distinctive Christian ethos is promoted by the headteacher, staff and governors and understood by the whole school community. This has a positive influence on pupils' confidence, values and attitudes and has highlighted the importance of prayer and worship. The pastoral care of the school for both children and families is strong. Parents are pro-active in their support for the school. Collective worship makes a significant contribution to the personal development of pupils.

Established strengths

- The very effective leadership of the headteacher who explicitly promotes the positive Christian ethos.
- The very good relationships of respect, support and care within the whole school community.
- The pastoral care of the school for the individual needs and concerns of each child and their families.
- The high priority of pupil participation in aspects of school life.
- The strong partnership between the school and the church.

Focus for development

- Involve the children more fully in planning and leading worship.
- Review the school aims and devise an ethos statement that explicitly communicates the school's Christian foundation.
- Formal monitoring of collective worship by the Foundation Governors.

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

Great Whelnetham School is committed to the development of the whole child within a strong and distinct Christian ethos. Pupils feel valued and special. Success both of achievement and personal development is recognised and celebrated during sharing assemblies, 'Star of the

Week' when fellow pupils describe a child's positive attributes, and by being invited to dine at the headteacher's table. Pupils enjoy school praising the care of the staff who encourage them with their learning. They feel safe and secure in school. Relationships and respect between all staff and children are very good and demonstrate the school's Christian context. The whole school is characterised by a sense of positive well-being and staff feel supported by each other and the headteacher. This aspect of the school's work has been identified as beneficial by outside agencies who have sent students who need sensitive care on placement here. Pupils enjoy the recent arrangements of all age team activities both for lunchtime organisation and during special work times such as the whole school's creation of a Spring display. Pupils behave and work together well.

Parents praise the inclusive nature of the school and the approachability of staff who are ready to listen to their concerns. Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils are given time to reflect on Christian values and how they could apply them to their own daily lives. The pupils support local and national charities. Pupils are proud of their school and their recent involvement in whole school decisions through the active school council, the Eco-school committee and the activities of the school teams. They are enthusiastic with what they have achieved together such as the gold recycling award. One pupil said "we learn lots of exciting things here". The curriculum is supported by many enrichment trips to places such as a farm, the sugar beet factory and to watch a Chinese dancer.

The school environment encourages pupils' spiritual development very well. Opportunities for spiritual reflection are promoted by the high quality and attractive displays created in a variety of materials sometimes with a Christian theme. Outside areas of quiet are distinct from activity areas. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate God's creation through their gardening activities when each team plants and cares for a variety of plants and seeds.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

This is demonstrated by the enjoyment of pupils who praise the story-telling and the lively songs. All pupils recognise collective worship as a special activity for remembering God and Jesus and appreciate the time given to them for prayer. Pupils are involved with blowing the candle out, and sometimes with acting out stories. They say they would like to be more involved in the delivery as they were during the recent 'Mothers' Day assembly. The school has highlighted this as a planned development. Worship promotes well the pupils' spiritual and moral development. The themes follow the liturgical year or are based on Christian values. Each worship session gives pupils time for individual reflection on the theme. Pupils say worship is an important community time as it "brings the whole school together".

The children's worship experience is broadened by all the teachers and the rector leading worship. The headteacher provides guidance and support to staff. Evaluation of worship is undertaken by Year 4 pupils and the headteacher and has resulted in a more suitable time being allocated and in a change of seating arrangement. Older children are now more aware of any needs of the younger ones during this time and can move to comfort or help them. Foundation governors regularly attend assemblies but are not yet involved with formal monitoring.

Grace and end of day prayers are now said daily. Christian based hymns are used in worship and it is planned that the Lord's prayer will be taught to the pupils. The rector leads worship fortnightly. This makes a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding of the Anglican faith. A Church of England resource for explaining Christian values will be used from next term. In the past the school celebrated major Christian festivals by the whole school being present at services at the local church. During its temporary closure these are held in school. Parents are invited and attendance is very good.

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

The new headteacher has been energetic in her outstanding leadership to ensure that strategies are in place to promote the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a Christian community by ensuring high quality care and respect for all as well as by introducing activities relating to the school's Christian ethos. She regularly shares her vision and what this means in practice with all staff. For example the discussion of behaviour policy included forgiveness and reconciliation as part of this. The self-evaluation of the school as a church school has recognised the school's strengths and highlighted areas for improvement

and many of these actions have been started. The school improvement plan has objectives linked to the church school community. The governors share the vision for the school and are extremely supportive as well as active within the school. Staff are committed to the success of the school as a Christian community and feel supported and appreciated. The recent well-being survey demonstrated that the school's score has risen.

The Anglican foundation of the school, which is known by all stakeholders, is explicitly referenced around school and recently in the brochure and other communications. The school aims however do not make reference to this but plans to review these have been made.

Parents are aware of the Christian ethos. They feel welcomed into the school and praise the concern of all the staff to the specific needs of their children. Parents are extremely pro-active in supporting the school and a high number of parents help voluntarily especially with the special team activities.

Links with the local church community are strong and pupils are very aware of the connection. The vicar is known well within the school community as worship leader. The Parochial Church Council members are invited to a Christmas meal with the children. Links with the diocese are very good and visitors from the Cathedral have been welcomed.

Links with the village community are very good. The expertise of people from the local community is regularly used within the school such as the skills of a gardener to advise and help during the planting activities. The school will take part in the village's Land Army day and a high proportion of villagers attend the school barbeque. The school has very good links with the adjacent pre-school provision and a successful induction programme takes place for pupils to transfer from this setting to the school.

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