

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Hartest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Row
Hartest
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP29 4DL

Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

LA : Suffolk
Date of inspection : 12 March 2008
Date of last inspection: February 2004
School's unique reference number: 124701
Name of Headteacher: Penny Easting
Name of Inspector : Simon Windmill
NS number: 182

Context

Hartest is a small school serving the village of Hartest and surrounding villages. It has well established links with the local parish church. Almost all the pupils are from white British backgrounds, and the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is about average. The school is likely to take in year 5 and 6 pupils under the local authority's reorganisation scheme.

Summary Judgement

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

The school's Christian ethos is evident within the school. It is shown in the caring and supportive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good, and they enjoy learning within a stimulating and safe atmosphere.

Established strengths

- The Christian ethos and atmosphere of care and support, which makes pupils feel valued, special and safe within the excellent relationships throughout the school
- The high quality of meaningful and enjoyable collective worship
- The high standards of behaviour, reflecting the school's Christian ethos

Focus for development

- Involve all stakeholders in developing a shared understanding of how pupils' spiritual growth can be fostered
- Include the evaluation of the impact of worship in the current system for recording and monitoring collective worship
- Create more dedicated areas in the school for quiet reflection

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

Care and support for pupils and staff is excellent. Pupils of all abilities are able to flourish in their learning and personal development. The school's Christian ethos is good, being soundly based on Christian values, which have a very positive influence on the life of the school.

Relationships within the school are excellent, and are seen in the school's warm, welcoming, inclusive and friendly atmosphere. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe and secure. They enjoy the praise they get for their achievements, and particularly enjoy celebrating this with each other.

Pupils learn from the good role models of staff and other adults, who help them to develop self-confidence and independence. Behaviour is very good. Pupils have a say in making the rules, so they understand and respect them, and know the consequences if rules are broken.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and a strong awareness and concern for the needs of others. The school does not have a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, so staff and governors do not have a shared understanding of how to encourage pupils' spiritual development. However, the school does provide many such opportunities, for example in collective worship, and by creating areas where pupils can take time for quiet reflection.

The school council gives pupils a say in running the school, which they value highly. They are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through diet and exercise. Pupils are also very aware of the need to look after the environment, for example by recycling as much as possible, and the school has attained the Green Flag Eco Schools award.

The Christian identity of the school is evident in various ways, the most striking being a sculpture in the entrance, 'Christ the Teacher', which depicts a sailing boat where the mast is in the form of a cross, and a picture of the 'Way of Life' sculpture from Ely Cathedral, which depicts a path leading to a cross.

The school has identified a need to extend its provision of multicultural education, for example by twinning and making e-mail links with other schools which represent a wider range of cultures and ethnicities.

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

Daily collective worship is good, and often outstanding. All pupils attend, and worship has a very positive impact on school life, reflected in the good relationships within the school. It is soundly based on the Christian gospel, and always includes singing, teaching, and time for prayer and reflection. Staff lead most acts of worship, along with the local Rector. All staff attend collective worship.

Collective worship is well planned, with themes reflecting the Church year, such as Pentecost, Lent and Advent. Visual symbols are used to aid understanding and mark collective worship as a special part of the school day, for example a cross, Godly Play figures or a candle. The church is used for the main Christian festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest, and the church also supports the school financially by providing such things as Christian books or Easter eggs.

Pupils enjoy worship, especially when they have a part to play in it. They value their opportunities for quiet reflection, and can relate what they experience in worship to their everyday life in school and at home. They can talk about stories from the Bible, and relate them to their own lives. They enjoy contributing to worship, and say they would like even more opportunities to take part in different ways, for example by acting out stories, playing music, or helping to plan or lead worship.

Pupils have a very good understanding of the range of purposes and styles of prayer, such as praise, giving thanks, saying sorry, and asking for help, forgiveness or healing. They would like even more opportunities to write their own prayers to use during collective worship. They know the Lord's Prayer, which is sometimes said during worship.

The school would like to find more visiting collective worship leaders from other denominations, but this has proved difficult.

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

The Headteacher is seen by staff and governors as a very effective leader of the school community, and staff feel valued and well cared for by her. She gives very good support to the collective worship co-ordinator. She also upholds the school's caring ethos, for example by supporting staff who are unwell, and giving them birthday cards. She also arranges social events for staff, such as a Christmas dinner, which helps sustain staff morale.

The Rector and foundation governors give very good support to the school. Foundation governors report regularly on matters relating the school's Church school status at governors' meetings. Staff and governors make good use of training opportunities provided by the Diocese, for example when implementing the new RE curriculum. The school's recruitment process refers to its Christian foundation.

Parents and governors speak very highly of the family atmosphere generated through the school's caring relationships, and are very happy with their school. They feel well informed about the school's activities. The views of the school council are taken seriously, and implemented whenever possible.

The school is held in very high regard by its wider community, and there are good links between them, for example with the West Suffolk Vineyard Church, some members of which lead worship from time to time, the Hartest Pre-School which is on the school site, and the local ballet class which uses the school hall. Hartest pupils take part in village events, such as Remembrance Sunday.

The school has made good progress in recording and monitoring collective worship, and now needs to make the evaluation of worship more rigorous in order to demonstrate and enhance the impact of worship on pupils.

Issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed effectively, and the school's self evaluation is accurate, providing a secure base for future development.