

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Necton Church of England First Voluntary Aided School

School Road
Necton
Swaffham
Norfolk
PE37 8HT

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk
Dates of inspection: 04.12.06
Date of last inspection: 11.01.99
School's unique reference number: 121121
Headteacher: Mrs Angela Eden
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Dorothy Lenton 460

School context

Necton First is a small Voluntary Aided School. There are 89 pupils who come from Necton and two other local parishes, as well as some from further afield. Almost all the children are of White British background. The local church has been through a long interregnum, but in September 2006 a new vicar was appointed. In September 2007 the school will merge with the nearby middle school to form a new primary school in the extended middle school building.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Necton First Church of England School as a Church of England school are outstanding

A dynamic Christian ethos permeates the whole school. All decisions made by governors and staff are based on the faith and practices of the Church of England. The care and concern shown by all the school community to one another is excellent. Children receive enriching experiences in which they are encouraged to develop spiritual awareness and a love for one another.

Established strengths

- The outstanding Christian ethos of the school in which all pupils are nurtured and highly valued
- The high quality of collective worship and the time given for children to be still and reflect
- The commitment of the head teacher, staff and governors in preserving and valuing the Christian faith in all decision-making

Focus for development

- Fully implement the new Norfolk Syllabus for Religious Education into planning and evaluation of children's work
- Introduce a "Church and School" information board in entrance giving information about what is happening in the local church

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

The school's Christian character is very strong and consistent in meeting the needs of its learners. The mission statement is the first page of the school brochure. This clearly states the value of its relationship with the church and its Christian foundation. This is reinforced when speaking to governors and parents. Christian values are evident in every part of the school, particularly in the quality of care and respect shown by adults and children to each other. The children are polite, opening doors and saying "please" and "thank you". This was particularly observed at lunch-time, when children also say a prayer of thanks. Children's achievements are given value through the use of a "Sparklers" board. Here the children's

work is celebrated in the display. A special assembly takes place when the parents of the children who receive “Sparkler” Certificates and Achievement Diaries are invited. All staff observed, whether teaching or support staff, were patient, consistent and calm in their approach to the children. The school is part of the Well-Being programme.

The school has a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Parents speak of it being “calm and caring”. Two parents of new children spoke of how their children settled in quickly. A letter was seen in which the parent particularly thanked the HT and children for their welcome to her daughter who had been nervous to begin with. There are extended opportunities for families to learn alongside their children through Rural Family Links and extended learning for swimmers. Governors and parents speak of knowing that their children are highly valued through things that the children say about school. One governor observed a group of children celebrating the success of a severely handicapped child in their class. She said that they talked about him being “our boy”.

Children’s own posters are displayed in the school that underline the care given to the children’s social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. For example children are encouraged to “have a chat with a teacher or another grown up or child” if you are worried about something. Another said “If I feel sad I can talk to....” With a list of those who would help. One year 2 child referred to one of these posters when speaking about what she would do if she felt sad. Children from each class are invited to talk to the governors on a regular basis about their school. They discuss what they enjoy and what they would like to improve. This is another way of informing governors about what is happening in the school.

There is a “Giving and Receiving” board in which children can be seen helping others less fortunate than themselves, by providing Christmas boxes through the Samaritan’s Purse charity, for example.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is given a high profile through the school. It is a focal point in the school day at a set time. All staff lead collective worship on a planned rota basis on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, with the head teacher leading on Friday. All staff attend each day. A member of the church community leads this time together on Mondays. The children are often given a sticker to remind them during the day of what they were thinking about together in collective worship that morning. The collective worship observed was excellent. The children came in quietly and reverently. A small table with a lit candle and a cross is displayed, while quiet music is played. The children are given an opportunity to reflect on what has been said. They take an active part in saying prayers and acting out stories. They say the Lord’s Prayer each day. There are planned themes for collective worship, which follow the Church festivals throughout the year. A Foundation governor is responsible for monitoring collective worship and reports to the full governing body. The children’s attitude to Collective Worship is positive. One child said that collective worship is “ a nice peaceful time in our school”. Others said “It is a time when I talk to God” and “I think it is important to say thank you to God” and “ we believe in God and it’s important to say sorry sometimes as well”. The Collective Worship Policy is embedded in the school. At present the head teacher and staff, with the Foundation governors, are evaluating the collective worship **planning**. The School Improvement Committee, which is made up of staff and Foundation governors, has made the decision to call this time that the children meet together “collective worship” rather than “assembly”.

There appear to be strong links with the local church and school events are reported in the church magazine “Pew News”, which goes to every household in the Parish. Prayers are regularly said for the school, and the head teacher speaks openly about how much she values these prayers. The children visit the church to look at the building and learn about the different symbols and robes used during worship. The school also uses the church for celebrating Mothering Sunday, Education Sunday and Harvest.

The effectiveness of the Religious Education is good

Religious Education is a priority in the current School Development Plan. The RE coordinator has good subject knowledge and is keen to develop the themes and planning in the new Norfolk Religious Education Syllabus. She has attended cluster-based Inset and delivered Inset to staff. In the Year 2 Religious Education lesson observed it was clear that the school is beginning to adopt the new framework. The teacher was keen that the children should understand the difference between learning **about** something and learning **from** it. The aims of the lesson were very clearly presented at the beginning and written on a small

board for the children to look at. They were frequently referred to throughout the lesson. The children appear used to thinking and reflecting. In the story of David and Goliath they could see that David overcame his difficulties through “belief in himself and faith in God”. They went on to discuss their own difficulties and how having **faith** was really powerful and important. One child said, “If you have faith in yourself and God then you will get through.” The children show a real interest in the subject, and different methods of teaching are used to stimulate their learning. For example “hot seating” and ICT were observed. The Religious Education coordinator explained how children are formally assessed at the end of each year using level descriptors. Teachers write in children’s books throughout the year. Although children reach the expected level of achievement by the time they reach Year 3, some children achieve better in Religious Education than other core subjects. This is observed through their reflective thinking and is not necessarily seen in written evidence. The new syllabus will enable the school to keep a closer record of children’s progress and prompt greater achievement. The head teacher and a Foundation governor monitor plans and observe lessons. This monitoring is reported to the whole governing body.

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

The Head Teacher and the Governors provide extremely strong and effective leadership in close partnership with one another. The school’s Christian Foundation is clearly stated on the first page of the brochure and in written policies. These aims are also seen on the wall in the school entrance, where there is a “Welcome” board for all visitors. The Head Teacher, in particular, takes a very strong lead in moving the school forward through her enthusiastic and committed approach. In the OFSTED report of November 2006, it states: “The head teacher provides a clear sense of direction, fostering effective teamwork by all staff and harnessing the support of parents and governors.” All the staff, whether teaching or support, work hard at improving teaching and learning in the school. There is a general atmosphere of togetherness and a striving to do the best for everyone in the school community.

The governors see the act of Collective Worship and the teaching of RE as central to the life of the school. When making new appointments it is important to them that staff are able to show respect for the Church School status and are able to be in sympathy with the Christian faith.

The Foundation governors take an active role in promoting the school as a Church School, and this regularly appears on the agenda of the governing body. The parents are pleased that not only is it a very good school but that it is also a church school. The newly appointed Vicar has children at the school and plans to play an active role in the school’s development, particularly when the First and Middle Schools merge in September, 2007. All the staff, parents and governors are working positively together and are not seeing the school as a closing school, but one that is moving into another phase in its history. The Foundation governors are particularly strong and provide excellent support at every level. Their involvement in producing the SIAS SEF is evident. They act as a critical friend as well as providing prayer support for the school.

SIAS report December 2006 Necton Church of England First School School Road Necton Swaffham Norfolk PE37 8HT