

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Necton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Middle School

School Road

Necton

Swaffham

Norfolk

PE37 8HT

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 2 February 2007

Date of last inspection: February 1999

School's unique reference number: 122100

Headteacher: Amanda Yates

Inspector's name and number: Simon Windmill 182

School context

Necton Church of England Middle School is a smaller than average rural middle school of 106 pupils serving the village of Necton. It has excellent links with the local parish church. About one third of pupils come from outside the catchment area. Most pupils come from white British backgrounds. There is a higher than average number of pupils with disabilities or learning difficulties. Because the school will be closed then re-opened as a Primary school in September, both head and deputy have temporary acting posts, staff turnover has been high, and there has been extensive building work, with pupils being taught in temporary classrooms. All this has caused a great deal of uncertainty and disruption during the past year.

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

The Christian ethos is very evident throughout the school. It is reflected in the caring and supportive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils' personal development is excellent and they enjoy learning within a stimulating, caring and safe atmosphere.

Established strengths

- The school's Christian ethos and atmosphere, within which all pupils feel cared for and valued
- The care and quality of relationships throughout the school
- The management, leadership and teamwork of the headteacher and governors

Focus for development

- Maintain the outstanding level of support for pupils and staff during the transition from a middle to a primary school
- Induct and develop the role of the newly appointed vicar
- Provide opportunities for pupils to contribute their own prayers in Collective Worship and at other times

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

The school's Christian ethos is outstanding. It is soundly based on Christian values, which influence the whole life the school. The school's warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere makes it feel like a close-knit family. Pupils get a great deal of individual attention, both in their learning, and in the development of their personal relationships, both between themselves and with all staff. This is confirmed by pupils, and by the results of parental surveys, which show an outstanding level of overall satisfaction with the school.

The level of care and support for pupils and staff is outstanding, especially the headteacher's role in keeping staff morale high in particularly difficult circumstances, making their well-being a very high priority. This in turn has enabled her and staff to minimise disruption to children's learning and to successfully maintain the exemplary level of support and nurture for pupils. The school's commitment to inclusivity is reflected in the care and support given to pupils of all abilities, faiths and cultures.

Pupils feel valued by all members of staff, and learn from the role models staff and other adults provide. As a result, they look after each other exceptionally well. Pupils know the school aims and rules, and understand the reasons for them. They are aware of the consequences if rules are broken. They are given opportunities to help formulate the rules, and therefore respect them. Pupils and staff value the School Council as a means of giving pupils a voice in how the school is run. There is also an Eco Council which concentrates on caring for the environment, for example through recycling, and an effective Buddy system. Pupils contribute willingly to fund raising for a number of charitable causes, such as Operation Christmas Child, and Seeds for Africa.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The headteacher, staff and governors regard spiritual and moral development as a vital part of pupils' learning. Staff encourage and nurture spiritual development by giving pupils opportunities for reflection, both within worship and during the school day within the wider curriculum. For example, a Millennium Garden has been created to give pupils a place for quiet reflection. The Christian identity of the school is visible through crosses in the foyer and hall, and lively displays around the building. The Christian foundation of the school is made clear during staff recruitment, and prospective staff are asked about their understanding of what it means to be a church school.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding.

Worship is seen as a central part of school life by the headteacher, staff and governors. It is soundly based on Christian principles and teaching, and always includes singing, teaching and prayer. Foundation governors, who have very close links with the church and school, are deeply involved in its work.. The newly appointed vicar is developing his role in the school, both within worship, and in a pastoral capacity. Worship is sometimes led by members of other denominations, for example the Methodist minister or members of the Youth for Christ team, and sometimes worship is led by a class.

Pupils enjoy worship and join in enthusiastically, especially when they have a part to play in it, such as acting out a story, playing music or reading a poem. They understand a range of purposes and styles of prayer. They know the Lord's Prayer and a school prayer, which are used during worship. Prayers are also sometimes said at other times in the day. Pupils would welcome more opportunities to write and read their own prayers.

Worship is planned termly, with themes for each week. Records of worship are kept, and the management team, including foundation governors, evaluate worship regularly. This evaluation in turn feeds into future planning. Worship reflects the church year, and the major Christian festivals, such as Christmas and harvest, are held in the church, when many parents and members of the wider community attend. Other special events in the life of the school are celebrated, for example a service of dedication for the new school buildings. The church is also used as a resource for the wider curriculum, for example by pupils visiting and comparing Necton church with other places of worship as part of Religious Education.

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

The clear and effective leadership of the headteacher and governors is outstanding. They are committed to promoting a distinctive and active Christian vision for the school, and Christian values underpin the school's life and work. The headteacher sees well-being of all involved in the school is central. She has forged a superb sense of teamwork within the school. This has carried the staff, governors and pupils through a very unsettling period of uncertainty for staff in relation to their jobs, while the disruption of major building work has not been allowed to impinge on pupils' nurture and learning.

Parents speak very highly of the family atmosphere generated through the school's caring relationships, and are very happy with the school. Their views are actively sought, and are used to inform school developments. Links with the local church and wider community are outstanding. The church contributes to the life of the school in various ways, for example by encouraging visits to the church to learn about its place and function in the community, and by giving Christian books to school leavers. The school regularly contributes to the parish magazine, and church members regularly pray for the school. School events are publicised to the wider community through the local press – for example the whole community had an open invitation to attend the dedication service for new building, and for the service on Education Sunday.

SIAS report February 2007 Necton CofE VC Middle School Norfolk PE37 8HT