

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Oakington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Water Lane  
Oakington  
Cambridge  
Cambridgeshire  
CB24 3AL

#### **Diocese: Ely**

Local authority: Cambridgeshire  
Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2007  
Date of last inspection: June, 2003  
School's unique reference number: 110833  
Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Jenkin  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs D Lenton 460

#### **School context**

Oakington is a small Primary school. Most of the 95 pupils come from the village of Oakington and the surrounding area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, but there are a small number from a range of different backgrounds and cultures.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Oakington CEVA Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Oakington Church of England Primary School is firmly rooted in distinctive Christian values of love and forgiveness. It is highly effective in the creative and imaginative provision that it makes for all those within the school community. This is achieved through the strong and committed leadership and management team of the school, which has a clear Christian vision for the school, in which individuals can develop in an atmosphere of mutual respect and care.

#### **Established strengths**

- The Head teacher's strong, clear vision for the school as a church school
- The worship, which is at the heart of the school
- The children's sensitivity to each other
- The inclusiveness of the school

#### **Focus for development**

- To develop the children as Worship leaders
- To raise the profile of the links with the local churches
- To imbed the new Syllabus for Religious Education agreed by the Ely Diocese and to include all six major world religions, to be taught at the end of Key Stage 2

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

On entering Oakington Church of England Primary School it is immediately apparent that the strong Christian ethos of love, understanding and joy permeates every aspect of its life. There is a quiet confidence among the children and adults who work there. The children are excellent at talking about what is important to their school and have a strong identity with a church school. This includes having a real understanding of each other's problems, and celebrating each other's achievements. Examples of these achievements are carefully displayed for all to see and range from sporting activities to kindness and good behaviour awards.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Every opportunity is taken to pray for each other. Children who are ill are regularly prayed for. The children

spoken to were very thoughtful and reflective. They explained how they prayed when they were concerned about something, whether world issues or something more personal. The children's sensitivity to one another is quite exceptional. The school's reputation for nurturing children who have failed elsewhere and have special educational needs is well justified. As part of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) project the "feelings" meeting gives children an excellent opportunity to discuss difficult issues. There are good examples of ways in which children should treat each other pinned round the classroom walls. High achievers are given opportunities to attend other schools for Maths Challenges, for example.

Parents speak highly of the school. They are particularly impressed with the way in which the Christian ethos is practically demonstrated in the children's care for each other, and through the many organisations that the children support, from the over 60s Club to Operation Christmas Child to writing to children in Kinoni.

The school is very inclusive and children from other cultures and beliefs attend. The parents of these children are encouraged to visit the school as part of the RE provision, in order to talk about their beliefs with all the children in the school. As a result, an excellent display of work on Muslim practices was seen at the time of the inspection. These parents care that the school has a strong belief in God and choose it for this reason.

The relationships and teamwork within the school are excellent, and all the adults demonstrate a genuine care and concern for all the children. There are many varied extra-curricular opportunities for the children to attend, including residential trips, partly funded by the governors. There is an annual Bible Club in school, and past pupils and pre-school children also attend. Children are encouraged to be independent leaders by organising and running their own very successful clubs.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. It is attended by all staff, and plays a very strong part in making Oakington a distinctively Christian school.

There is a sense of God's presence as the children come into the hall quietly and respectfully. To emphasise the importance of worship there is a group of very good musicians, made up of children and adults, who play as the school comes into the hall. The excellent singing of the children to modern Christian songs creates an atmosphere of worship and praise, and a lit candle adds to this sense of worship. The children take advantage of this time by being still and quiet.

Collective Worship has its own section in the School Improvement Plan. It is exceptionally well planned. It is created imaginatively and thoughtfully and based on the Church year. The school has developed its own very effective Liturgy, with appropriate responses.

Children are beginning to lead parts of the worship through saying of prayers and readings. Important milestones in their lives and the life of the school are marked with acts of worship, for example, when children enter and leave the school, they are given a special candle. The children enjoy Collective Worship and have a strong belief in the power of prayer.

Special services are held throughout the year, for example Education Sunday, Easter and harvest. These are well attended by parents. There is a strong link with the different local Christian denominations, and ministers from these churches as well as the local Anglican vicar lead services. Other visitors such as the Bishop's visitor and a Scripture Union representative make valuable contributions to the children's worship experience.

On the day of the Inspection Pentecost was being celebrated and the children were very engaged and excited about the subject, when the power of the Holy Spirit was cleverly illustrated with a puppet and a hair dryer. The children are given excellent opportunities to reflect on the moral and spiritual issues that arise from the Bible. Working in groups the children thought about the qualities that the first Christians needed, and they demonstrated considerable insight into how these qualities might directly impact on their own lives.

The school is sensitive to those children who attend the school who are of other faiths. These children are invited, but not compelled, to take part in Collective Worship. This they do willingly. Staff, who are not practising Christians also ask for prayer.

The local parish church of St Andrew's is used for the end of term Collective Worship. The

school recognises the value of using this building as a witness to the local community as well as giving the children a feeling for worship within another context.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Religious Education has a very high profile within the school curriculum. It is afforded the same status, at the very least, as the other foundation subjects. The religious education lesson observed was extremely good. It was thorough, interesting, varied and imaginatively taught. The children in Reception and Year One were learning about baptism. A parent had brought in the gowns and gifts given to her triplets on their baptism. Through the use of role-play, questioning, art and use of real artefacts the children were thoroughly engaged and learning very effectively. Part of the classroom was turned into an excellent role-play area as a church. The excellent role-play areas and displays in other classrooms demonstrate the importance of this subject to the life of the school.

Religious Education is well planned and evaluated. Careful monitoring takes place regularly and the standard of the work seen was excellent. The children discussed their work articulately and with enthusiasm. The impact on the children's understanding is illustrated by one boy's observation: "It can help you live your life in the future – some feel it now."

The school uses pupils' families who are of other faiths extremely effectively, by encouraging these families to contribute to discussions or to source pictures and artefacts for display. The children from these different faith backgrounds take part in Religious Education and, at the same time, the school is able to use this wealth of different experience as a celebration of diversity very successfully.

This school has strong links with the Diocese. The coordinator for Religious Education, the staff and governors make good use of this resource for training. The children use the many different local churches and Ely Cathedral for worship and educational visits, including Religious education.

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

The leadership and management of this school are exceptionally good. The head teacher and the Foundation governors have a very clear Christian vision for the school. The children's spiritual development is to be extended through the use of "Thinking Skills". Children are extremely confident and their input into the life and aims of the school is excellent, and this will give them an exceptional opportunity to become worship leaders in their own right. The Foundation governors through the development committee act as a reflective, critical friend to the school, particularly in challenging the school about its aims. These have been further developed through their self-evaluation for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) document. Each governor has a specific role in the school, and effective monitoring of Collective Worship and Religious Education is achieved through the curriculum committee.

An effective performance management system is in place in which all adults are encouraged to share in the vision for the school.

The local Anglican vicar has a strong presence in the school. He is a member of the governing body and leads Collective Worship. He is deeply committed to the children's spiritual development through experiencing awe and wonder in worship.

The school has an excellent relationship with parents. Those interviewed were impressed by its openness and inclusiveness. They all agreed that it is the Christian foundation of the school that makes it special. The head teacher has made some strong links with members of the local church congregation. She meets half-termly for prayer with this group who, through its highly supportive role, are a great encouragement to the staff and children.

The Foundation governors, with the head teacher are very committed to the school community. The leadership recognises that the school is vital, not only strategically but specifically in acting as a Christian witness at the heart of the community. Many groups meet here, including the Parish Council, as there is no community building in the village. It is clear that all are valued and welcomed.