

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

### Orford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Orford  
Woodbridge  
Suffolk  
IP12 2LU

#### Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk  
Dates of inspection: 6 and 7 February 2008  
Date of last inspection: March 2005  
School's unique reference number: 124777  
Principal : Mr Richard Dediccoat  
Inspector's name and number: Betty Barratt 203

### School context

The school is smaller than most primary schools. Learners come from a wide range of backgrounds in Orford and the surrounding villages, but the number of those eligible for free school meals is well below average. Learners' attainment on entry is in line with that expected for four year olds, and the percentage with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The number who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is much higher than usual. Few learners come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and very few speak English as an additional language. The parish church is about five minutes walk away.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Orford Church of England School as a Church of England School are good

The strong Christian ethos which permeates the school inspires excellent relationships, and very positive values and attitudes to teaching and learning. Learners thrive in a happy, relaxed and secure environment. They respond very well to the high expectations for their achievement and behaviour, and their care and consideration of one another. An exceptionally wide and varied range of out of school activities enriches their learning, and their confidence and self-esteem are boosted by encouragement and reward. Adults are excellent role models.

### Established strengths

- The deep commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to promoting a strong Christian vision for the school
- The Christian principles which are lived out by the whole community
- The excellent relationships and the care of pupils for one another
- The outstanding impact of Christian values on enabling learners to flourish as individuals

### Focus for development

- Improve learners' knowledge of Anglican faith and practices.
- Ensure that learners are able to link moral messages with their foundation in Christian teaching
- Ensure that all pupils are fully challenged in their learning in religious education
- Develop the role of governors in formal school self evaluation processes

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

The school's very strong Christian ethos results in all learners being helped to flourish as individuals and to achieve their best. Learners feel valued and secure in a warm, welcoming and orderly environment. The excellent relationships between them and their teachers, and between adults, enable all to enjoy learning. Learners are happy, confident, articulate, and very well-behaved. The large number who come from other schools settle happily, and any previous behaviour problems are quickly resolved. Learners are proud of their school as a Church of England School, and relish joining its wide-ranging activities including the sport, music, gardening and art activities on Thursday afternoons, and after school clubs such as the Friday Club held at the local Baptist church in partnership with the school. Learners enjoy many exciting visits out of school, including outdoor activities in nearby parkland, and sampling interesting foods at a local restaurant. They value the many opportunities they have to take responsibility and contribute their ideas about school life through, for example, the School Council. They are proud of the contribution their ideas made to improve the playground. Learners are very caring, considerate and helpful to one another, with older children taking good care of those who are younger. They are also sensitive to the needs of those in the wider community raising money for many charities including Children in Need, Water Aid and Comic Relief. Closer to home they make cakes and entertain at the annual Orford Tea Party for older people, and the school choir sings at a local retirement home. The rich and varied learning experiences provide outstanding support for learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual development is further supported by the vibrant and attractive, displays throughout the school which include much high quality art work, and by the specially designed outside areas, such as the secret garden, which encourages quiet reflection. The presence of crosses and other articles of faith, throughout the school, including the worship table in the school hall are constant reminders of the school's close partnership with the church.

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

Collective Worship is regarded as being very important in the life of the school. It is very carefully planned and evaluated by the worship co-ordinator and governor responsible for worship and religious education. Evaluation findings are used to inform school development planning. The predominately Christian themes, and the worship table, cross and candles in the school hall, are clear reminders of the Christian nature of assemblies. All learners and adults participate fully. Staff value the opportunities for them to reflect during assemblies. Major Christian festivals and special services, such as Harvest Festivals, Christmas, Easter, St. Edmund's Day, and the Year 6 leavers' service, are celebrated in church. Collective worship in both school and church are attended by parents and governors. Learners enjoy collective worship especially when it is shared with their parents. They sing with enjoyment, listen attentively, enjoy stories and join reverently in reflection and prayer. The leading of reflection by a group of learners standing at the worship table, has a profound impact. While they usually understand the moral relevance of themes, they do not always link the messages with Christian teaching. Learners play an active part during assemblies reading, organising music, operating the projector to display hymns, and they lead those on Fridays. Prayer is very important in the life of the school. Learners chose the grace which is sung at the beginning of midday meals, and readily write prayers for assemblies and church services. Most know the Lords' Prayer. Governors' meetings always open with a prayer. The Rector plays a key role in supporting the school's worship both in school assemblies and church. Learners relate very well to him and enjoy church services, but their knowledge of the main features of the church, and of Anglican faith and practices are limited. For instance, they were only able to name the font and pulpit as key features in churches, and struggled to recall the correct term of altar for the table with a cross and candles. They also had very little knowledge of liturgy and church services including the Eucharist.

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

Teaching and learning are good in religious education. In the lessons observed, learners were thoroughly engaged and worked with interest. Those in Reception and Years 1 and 2, responded extremely well to the teacher's challenge for them to think and reflect on different ways leaders can help and support. They thought deeply and readily recognised leaders they knew, including the Rector, and were in-sightful in describing their responsibilities and in identifying important leadership qualities such as the ability to communicate. The teacher's skilled and increasingly demanding questioning led them to swiftly identify the importance of Jesus' leadership. Learners in Years 5 and 6 were very interested in comparing the Christian and Jewish versions of the Ten Commandments, and identifying the books in the Old Testament which constitute the Torah. They were very attentive and concentrated hard referring confidently to the Bible. But too few opportunities for them to take initiative in, for example, discussion and in planning and organising their work, meant that the more able especially were not fully stretched. Learners make good progress on the whole, but procedures for systematically assessing and measuring their achievement are at an early stage.

Religious education is regarded as being of great importance. It makes an important contribution to promoting the Christian character of the school, and to supporting learners spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject is well-planned and resourced, and its effectiveness is kept under review. Teachers attend diocesan training along with regular meetings led by the religious education subject leader, for instance, on the implementation of the new Suffolk syllabus. Planning takes appropriate account of teaching about other faiths through for example, linking and comparing different festivals such as Christmas, Divali and Hunnukah. Learning is enriched by visits to churches and other places of worship including St Edmundsbury Cathedral. Learners have also visited a Sikh temple, but visits to places of worship of other faiths are made difficult by the school's geographical location.

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

The headteacher's dedication to promoting the school's Christian character has raised awareness of the importance of realising its Christian vision. It has also led to much greater physical evidence of its status as a church school. For example, the prominently displayed colourful cross in the entrance immediately establishes the school's Christian identity as do the other Christian symbols throughout the school. The headteacher is an excellent role model and extremely well supported by staff and members of the Governing Body. Staff feel greatly valued and strongly support the school's vision as a church school. Foundation governors, who include the Rector, fully recognise the importance of the school's distinctive Christian character, and are very supportive of its aims, monitoring these informally and questioning the school about areas needing development. The role of governors in the formal self evaluation of the achievement of the school's Christian vision is not yet fully developed. The school's Christian purpose is clearly expressed in its aims and values which underpin and guide all policies. The school's admission policy is fully inclusive, and the Christian message made available to all families especially during welcoming visits. Applicants for staff appointments are made aware of the Christian nature of the school. Staff and parents are involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's achievement of its vision as a church school. Parents respond well to questionnaires.

The already close links with the parish church are being strengthened by monthly weekday family services though attendance by parents is not yet very high. The local Anglican clergy contribute very well to school life but there are fewer links with other denominations or faiths. The Rector visits the school regularly in addition to taking assemblies on Thursdays. There is a strong working partnership between school and church. The school supports church events and fundraising such as that for Vila Maninga, and the links with the diocese including visits to the cathedral and by bishops to the school enrich learners' experiences. The school has been of central importance in the life of the community for well over a century, and local residents, many of whom are former pupils, regularly visit the school to attend functions. Involvement in high profile activities such as East Feast and the Suffolk schools' music festival at the Snape highlight its many achievements.

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