

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Orton St Johns Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,**  
Riseholme  
Orton Goldhay  
Peterborough  
Cambridgeshire  
PE2 5SP

**Diocese: Ely**

LEA: Peterborough

Dates of inspection: January 15th and 16th 2007

Date of last inspection September 2000

School's Unique reference number: 110856

Headteacher: Mrs Collette Firth

SIAS Inspector: Jill Pauling196

### Context of the school

Orton St Johns VA Primary School has 206 pupils on roll and serves families from the local housing estate. There are a very high proportion of children who have learning disabilities with statements for their needs. Three quarters of the school are pupils from White British backgrounds. The others are children from a wide range of nationalities. Many of these children are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. A much higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave their classes part way through the school year and the percentage of children who are entitled to free school meals is also above average. The Headteacher has been in post since September 2005.

### Summary Judgement

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Orton St Johns as a Church of England school are good.**

It is a good church school with a very distinctive Christian ethos that permeates school life and brings positive values and attitudes to teaching and learning. These values and attitudes of respect, care and love are embedded in the mission statement and reflected in all areas of school life.

### Established strengths

- An outstanding Christian ethos in which all learners are nurtured and valued highly.
- High quality acts of worship to which all members of the school community contribute.
- Strong and productive relationships with the Church and local community.
- Confident, polite and well-motivated pupils.

### Focus for development

- Adopt and implement consistently a revised syllabus for religious education.
- In religious education ensure that the right balance is maintained between Christianity and other faiths.
- Establish separate and distinct policies for collective worship and religious education.

**The distinctive Christian ethos of the school is outstanding and is embedded in every area of school life.**

The school makes excellent provision to meet the needs of all the children. Learners from all groups feel valued including those with special educational needs and those experiencing difficulties. They are all confident that their voice will be heard. The secure, family nature of the school is reflected in the friendly, outgoing attitude of the children towards visitors. The Headteacher and governors have introduced a creative range of innovative projects and initiatives to enable and empower all learners to achieve in all areas. The excellent work being done in pastoral care is now being reflected in raised levels of attainment in core subjects. Children are able to identify the special nature and characteristics of their school as a church school. They are keen to identify activities and displays that reflect the Christian foundation of the school and are able to discuss their links with the church. They look forward to visits from the local vicar who they regard as a friend and this results in a willingness to contribute singing and drama to services that they attend in the church. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is very good throughout the school, irrespective of their background, as evidenced by the integration of a significant number of children from overseas. Many of these have learning disabilities and no spoken English. Relationships are very strong and children's behaviour is good. Work in 'philosophy for children' has resulted in an ability to be able to reflect on consequences of selfish or unthinking actions. They have learned tolerance and forgiveness and show respect for others. A good example of this is the care and concern shown by all the class to a new child who had no spoken English and severe learning disabilities. Parents are very positive about the inclusive and caring nature of the school. Children with special educational needs thrive.

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

Worship occupies an important position in the life of the school and takes place at the same time every school day ensuring that it is seen as being at the heart of the school. The children talk with enthusiasm about a variety of acts of worship and recognised that worship could include singing, prayer and reflection. The whole staff are organised into teams to lead worship. These include members of both teaching and non-teaching staff. The Headteacher also takes some of the whole school worship and the vicar comes to school to lead worship once a week. The worship co-ordinator is a teaching assistant. She was appointed because of her passion and aptitude for the job. The themes for worship follow Diocesan guidance and are planned appropriately. The governors monitor and evaluate worship and the school has plans to include the children in the evaluation process. There is regular participation by both individuals and groups of learners who contribute bible readings, drama, hymns accompanied by sign language and prayers. Worship has a good impact on the learner because it is accessible and varied in content using story, drama, reflection, prayer and a range of appropriate music. A candle is usually used as the focus for worship. Members of staff attend and participate in whole school worship. The children say or sing a short communal prayer before lunch. Worship is Christian with some strong Anglican elements linked to seasons in the Church year. Parents and members of the wider community appreciate being invited to special assemblies and expressed a belief that acts of worship are an important and integral part of this church school. For example, the whole school attend church every half term for a worship service. In this setting, the children are introduced to Anglican liturgy. This makes a strong impact on the learners who are keen to discuss their experiences. The vicar reports that the governors have a shared vision when it comes to the school proclaiming its Christian status and principles. The school also recognises and is sensitive to the beliefs and traditions of children from other cultures. It takes care to ensure that there is constructive dialogue with all their families about attendance at worship. At the moment no child is withdrawn from R.E. or Collective Worship.

### **Religious Education is good and has a positive impact on the school community.**

Standards are at least as good and in some cases better than those achieved in core subjects although there is still not enough evidence of progression and the children need to be encouraged to take more care in the presentation of their written work. There is some impressive work being undertaken in assessment and there is good evidence that these assessment strategies support planning.

Throughout the school the children learn collaboratively and develop a range of skills that enable them to compare and contrast aspects of different faiths. This has made it possible for them to discuss issues and formulate opinions. Good subject knowledge and planning has resulted in high quality teaching and learning. The children are able to talk about how religious education affects their feelings and understanding of the world and how it develops and influences their own beliefs.

The R.E. policy recognises the importance of introducing other world faiths and the values they bring to school. There are plans to look at the balance between the teaching of Christianity and other world faiths and ways in which religious education can be taught using a cross curricular approach whilst retaining the integrity of the subject, and the inspector supports this development.

The R.E. curriculum follows the County scheme but there are plans to supplement this with some materials from Ely Dioceses. R.E. has a high profile in the school and this is evidenced by vibrant displays throughout the school. Some innovative approaches to reporting and recording the Christmas story had made a special impact.

The R.E. co-ordinator is experienced and has good subject knowledge. There is rigorous monitoring of teaching to ensure equality of provision across the school by senior management.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school is good.**

The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher contribute significantly to the success of the school by promoting a distinctive Christian vision for the school. Recognising the barriers to learning in their children, they have sought out new imaginative and innovative approaches. These have resulted in a calm and focused ethos in which good teaching and learning can take place.

The Governors are aware of the school's Christian vision and purpose that are expressed in the school's aims. These are evident in the new school logo, attractive handbook and prominent displays. The Vicar and Foundation governor are instrumental in promoting this. The support of the Chair of Governors for the Headteacher and staff is exemplary. The whole school community has a strong sense of identity. The Headteacher has achieved much since her appointment. The Headteacher and Governors have recently carried out a thorough review of the school using Diocesan church school self-evaluation materials. This has given them a clear picture of where the school is now and priorities for future development. The Headteacher provides strong leadership and all staff feel valued and affirmed. Everyone within the school community is confident that their voice will be heard. They speak of a strong team ethos based on Christian principles. Many non-teaching staff are involved in positions of responsibility and they feel motivated because their talents have been recognised and appreciated.

There are close links with the local Church and there are plans to develop and extend these so that the children benefit from even more prayerful support. Parents feel that the teachers are always available for their children and that the school provides unique opportunities for their children to flourish in a compassionate and caring Christian environment. The adults are all good role models and are working hard to ensure that the improved attitudes and behaviour of all the children are maintained.