

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Overstrand, The Belfry Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

23, Cromer Road,
Overstrand,
Norfolk.
NR27 0NT.

Diocese:**Norwich**

Local authority:

Norfolk

Dates of inspection:

11th-12th November 2008

Date of last inspection:

January 2006

School's unique reference number:

121123

Headteacher:

Mr. Stuart Brooks

Inspector's name and number:

Mr. Steve Carter

School context

The Belfry Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School currently has one hundred and five pupils on roll. Pupils are almost all White British and mainly come from Overstrand, although some travel from nearby villages and a few travel considerable distances to attend. The Belfry has been housed in a brand new building since September 2007. The Head Teacher has been in post for four years, however, a key staffing issue has adversely affected the school's progress since its last Section 48 inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Belfry CEVA Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory

On a day-to-day level, The Belfry is a vibrant primary school, in which a dedicated staff delivers good quality education within a Christian context. It makes excellent use of its new hall and the parish church to deliver good quality Acts of Worship, which are distinctive of the Christian faith. However, in terms of medium and long-term planning, there is an urgent and overdue need to strengthen leadership and management in areas which are specific to the school's Christian foundation, especially involving senior management and governance, by giving a higher priority to the development of RE within the school's established development planning procedures.

Established strengths

- Outstandingly good behaviour of pupils
- Good quality of collective worship, involving all teaching staff, the Rector and visitors
- A happy, secure and caring school, in which the staff model well the Christian ethos by delivering a high quality of teaching, learning and pastoral care

Focus for development

- The Governing Body to fulfil its statutory duty formally to appoint a governor to be responsible for Collective Worship and RE
- RE and Collective Worship to become an agenda item at every governors' meeting
- RE and Collective Worship to be re-instated to the School Improvement Plan and to be regularly monitored by governors and senior staff in terms of quality and progress towards agreed targets
- The Governing Body to seek to appoint a suitably experienced and qualified teacher to be RE Coordinator for Foundation, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 phases
- The Head Teacher to use the opportunities provided by the construction, monitoring and evaluation of documents such as the School Improvement Plan and Self-Evaluation Materials to engage all staff in the building and sharing of the school's Christian vision

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

The Christian Foundation of the school is explicit in the school brochure and is evident symbolically in the school sign, stained glass windows.

Pupils feel valued and special. The school has a happy and safe ethos, due to the good caring support of school staff.

Although there is no current policy statement on pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development, there was good evidence that it is being effectively delivered. Pupils have raised money for a range of charities and there are links with schools in Kenya, the Caribbean and USA.

Good relationships are rightly seen as a strength of the school. The school has introduced Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) in Foundation and Key Stage 1 and is introducing it into Key Stage 2, also engaging with its supporting Christian resource, 'Teacher's Dozen.' This can be demonstrated to be having a positive impact on relationships. The pupils value the School Council and would appreciate it if more meetings could take place.

The brand new school benefits from being light and bright in every area, including corridors, classrooms and the excellent hall, which are enhanced by good displays of pupils' work. 'Greenfingers' Club seeks to foster interest and skills in the environment. The pupils appreciated being consulted over the equipment for the new school playground and have a strong sense of ownership of and responsibility for it as a result.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

A well-planned Act of Collective Worship takes place at the start of every school day and is typically about twenty minutes in length. The observed Act of Worship was of good quality, making good use of music, visual aids, pupil participation in prayers and hymn and pupil operation of data projected images. All teaching staff are involved in leading the Act of Worship on a rota basis and support is provided for them, where needed. The Rector plays a part in delivering Acts of Worship. A Reader and other appropriate visitors also take part in leading worship from time to time.

Good daily use is made of set prayers in the Act of Worship, before lunch and at dismissal.

There are five church services every year and three further church-related Acts of Worship. One observed during the inspection commemorated St. Martin. Pupils participated fully in the singing of hymns. The teaching was accessible to all ages and abilities and good use was made of the church environment.

Specifically Anglican aspects of faith and practice are well embedded through the use of set prayers. The church year is well represented in the themes of the Acts of Worship.

Pupils display generally positive attitudes towards the Act of Worship and good routines have been established. In the Act observed, pupils Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development was clearly enhanced. There are limited occasions for pupils to reflect, or work on the theme of the assembly in class. There are ideas to use the SEAL themes increasingly to do so. Opportunities for pupils actively to participate in the preparation and planning of assemblies are relatively few at present.

The Governing Body does not currently fulfil its statutory obligation in that it has not formally appointed a governor to be responsible for Collective Worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

At Foundation, Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, standards of learners are at least in line with expectations. There is evidence of good professional planning in the form of RE Handbooks, which are accessible to staff and give clear guidance on Schemes of Work, lesson units and resources. In this phase, the school has been following the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus since 2006. Pupils make generally sound progress with some making good progress. Marking standards varied, some being minimal and some lacking clear advice as to how a pupil might improve a piece of work. Agreed Syllabus levels are used to assess standards of attainment. In the two lessons observed, teaching was good, well planned and engaging. The content was accessible to all learners and differentiation was achieved by outcome. Lesson aims were fully met by most pupils. Pupils demonstrated positive attitudes.

At Upper Key Stage 2, RE suffers from a lack of leadership, such that progress has been limited since the previous inspection of 2006. The QCA RE syllabus is followed, but there is a lack of effective line management, coordination and guidance. A few cross-curricular links have been made between RE and other subjects, such as Art.

RE clearly promotes the Christian character of the school in Foundation, Key Stage 1 phase and lower Key Stage 2, but it currently does not do so to the same extent in Upper Key Stage 2.

The importance of RE is made clearly evident in the school brochure. The issue of the provision of adequate time for RE has been addressed since the last inspection. However, the RE Policy has remained un-reviewed since 2004, nor has the subject of RE been part of the School Development Plan for the past two years. As a result, inadequate progress has been made on the issues raised at the last inspection. The system of lesson observations of RE is not adequate to ensure that consistently good quality of teaching and learning is taking place. The school has not placed a high enough priority on the development of RE over the past three years.

The school has plans to work towards the appointment of a single person to coordinate RE across both Key Stages and this will be beneficial if a person with the right qualifications and experience can be found.

The Governing Body does not currently fulfil its statutory obligation in that it has not formally appointed a governor to be responsible for RE.

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

The school has a clear Mission Statement, which is prominent in the school brochure and is well supported by the Rector in terms of Acts of Worship and the development of RE at Foundation, Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 phase. Church services are well-attended and all parents, together with a significant number of community representatives, were present at the opening, by the Bishop of Lynn, of the new school. Parents speak warmly about the school. Governors' meetings start with prayer. However, the Head Teacher states that he would appreciate time to reflect on his role as spiritual leader and what it means and the inspector agrees with this, especially as there is currently no agreed and clearly-articulated vision for the school's Christian development at levels of governance and senior management.

RE and Collective Worship have not appeared in the School Improvement Plan for the past two years, such that a key opportunity has been missed for the governing body to fulfil its role in challenging and monitoring the school in the development and realization of its Christian vision. This oversight has also been instrumental in restricting progress in some of the areas for development identified at the previous inspection, even though individual members of staff have undertaken sterling work to progress issues, such as the development of RE at Foundation, Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 phase. Other than the training of new governors, the governing body has not made use of the expertise of the Diocese in order further to understand and to develop its role specific to the Christian foundation of the school. The formulation and writing of the current church school self-evaluation materials have not

been subject to consultation with governors, nor with staff, such that they cannot be regarded as a shared view. The governing body is not currently fulfilling its statutory duty formally to appoint a governor to be responsible for RE and for Collective Worship.

SIAS report, November 2008 for The Belfry CEVA Primary School, Overstrand, Norfolk,
NR27 0NT