

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Pulham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Harleston Road,
Pulham Market,
Diss
Norfolk
IP21 4SZ

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 13th-14th November 2006

Date of last inspection: 3rd-4th November 1999

School's unique reference number: 121051

Headteacher: Miss Lesley Farrer

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Kathryn Wright (436)

School context

Pulham School has 134 pupils on roll who come from the village of Pulham Market and the surrounding area. Pupils are almost all from families of White British backgrounds and few are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average, though the number with a statement is relatively high. The headteacher has been in post for about one year. The school has links with churches in both Pulham Market and Pulham St Mary which are part of a Team Benefice.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Pulham Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

The school has a distinctive Christian ethos 'Living by Christian Values' which permeates the life of the school. The school is characterised by a strong sense of teamwork and co-operation. Although only in post for one year, the headteacher has effectively strengthened links with the community, including the local churches. The school's self evaluation is secure, honest and accurate.

Established strengths

- Strong and productive relationships with the church and local community
- Positive and caring relationships between all members of the school community
- The modelling of Christian values by staff
- The well being of the whole school community
- The effectiveness and impact of the school council

Focus for development

- Formalise regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of collective worship, especially by learners
- Raise the profile of 'church school status' in policies and through displays around the school
- Involve all stakeholders, particularly learners and parents, in the self evaluation of the school as a church school
- Ensure the continued development of collective worship and RE through the appointment of a new co-ordinator

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

The ethos of the school is clearly rooted in Christian values and the practical outworking of this is demonstrated in many aspects of school life. The school is inclusive and its aims are being reviewed in the light of 'Every Child Matters'. The relationships between all members of the community are positive and caring. Children talk about the school as a team where everyone works together. The well being of children and staff is a high priority. Emphasis is placed on the 'whole child' through healthy eating projects and an extensive range of extra curricular activities. Learners take part in a range of charity events including Operation Christmas Child and raising money for the CLIC Sargent charity. The pupil voice is valued highly and the proactive nature of the school council is to be commended. For example the school council was involved in the appointment of the headteacher and has worked with the Parish Council to improve the village environment. Children are happy and secure. They feel able to share their concerns with staff and are confident that they will be treated fairly and with respect. The effectiveness of the 'Buddy' system was observed during a playtime when older children supported those in reception. Pupils have high self-esteem. This is supported by a merit system which enables children to nominate each other for awards. In addition, one teacher spoke of the way in which conflicts were resolved in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. The spiritual development of pupils is good throughout the school. Children speak positively about prayer and identified the 'Jessica Bench' as a place where they could be quiet and reflect. In addition, specific opportunities for spiritual development are provided through the curriculum. For example, as part of a literacy lesson pupils wrote prayers for Remembrance Day and the recent visit of a storyteller enabled children to wonder and use their imaginations creatively. However, at the current time the school environment is not used effectively to reinforce children's spiritual understanding or to promote the school's church status.

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

Collective worship is effectively planned and recorded. Although the current collective worship policy does not make reference to the school's Christian foundation, Christian values were explicit in the acts of worship observed. For example children were asked to reflect on God's creation and how they might appreciate it using their senses. Children understand the importance of collective worship. They talk about valuing the quiet and having time to think about God. Children respond well during acts of worship. They are calm and respectful. Children are actively involved in singing, playing musical instruments and sharing their ideas about the theme for the day. Children lead worship on a Friday when the school celebrates achievements and awards merits. Children are able to make connections between collective worship and daily life. For example, as a result of an act of worship one child was able to talk about the way he might help others and share his feelings. Services to celebrate key festivals in the church year are held in the church next to the school or in Pulham St Mary. The school held a service for Remembrance Day in the church and many children said this made them feel closer to God. Parents and governors regularly attend acts of worship. Governors are involved in the informal monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of acts of worship. The local clergy lead an act of worship in school once a week. These acts of worship follow the church year and include specifically Anglican themes, including the Lord's Prayer. The school benefits greatly from the input of a range of ministers, who have developed creative ways of engaging pupils such as using 'bubbles' during prayer times. Whilst not all staff attend acts of worship daily, they do lead grace before lunch each day with their class. In addition, they always attend the acts of worship led by visitors and one teacher commented on how this supported her own personal development. Children have the opportunity to take part in a Eucharist service once a year at Easter. Children spoke enthusiastically about this event and explained accurately the significance of the occasion for Christians. The school is currently reviewing the leadership of collective worship since the retirement of the previous post holder last term.

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

A clear Christian vision is articulated by the headteacher and governors. The mission statement is explicitly Christian and has recently been reaffirmed by the governing body. The school identifies its church status through its brochure and signs. The governing body and staff were involved in the completion of the Diocesan self evaluation, however the input from parents and children was limited. The headteacher provides effective leadership and all staff feel valued and affirmed. The headteacher has spent time with staff to identify their strengths and to create a 'team spirit'. The relationship with the local churches and the community is highly effective and productive. The school is actively involved in community events such as the Horticultural Show and Music Festival. The school is proactive in forging links with village organisations such as the playgroup and Over 60s group. The church and school provide mutual support. This is demonstrated through the provision of a 'Friday Club' in the school which is based on Christian values and run by members of the church. In addition, the school building is used once a month on Sundays for a family worship service. The local clergy and governors have close relationships with the school and provide good support, both practically and through prayer. For example, governors regularly listen to children read and help with sports day. There are also good links with other local denominational groups.

SIAS report November 2006 Pulham Church of England (VC) Primary School, Harleston Road, Pulham Market, Diss, Norfolk. IP21 4SZ