

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Johns Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Victory Road,
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP44 LE

Diocese: St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

LA : Suffolk

Date of inspection: 28 November 2007

Date of last inspection: April 2005

School's unique reference number: 124781

Name of Headteacher: Helen Picton

Name of Inspector: Simon Windmill

NS number: 182

Context

St Johns Church of England Aided Primary School is an average sized school in Suffolk with 208 pupils. It has limited links with the local parish church. Almost all pupils come from white British backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is about average.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The school's Christian ethos is evident in many ways, such as the excellent caring and supportive relationships between pupils and staff, in pupils' personal development and behaviour, and in the excellent Religious Education provided.

Established strengths

- The Christian ethos and atmosphere, which underlies every aspect of the school's life
- The excellent caring and supportive relationships with to pupils, which makes them feel valued, special and safe
- The excellent teaching and learning in Religious Education

Focus for development

- With coming of a new vicar, refresh the schools relationship with its local church
- Use the new Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural policy to develop a shared understanding of the ways spiritual and moral development can be encouraged
- Involve governors, staff and pupils in recording, monitoring and evaluating the impact of Collective Worship on pupils

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding in meeting the needs of all pupils.

Care and support for pupils and staff is outstanding. Pupils of all abilities are able to flourish in their learning and personal development. The school's Christian ethos is excellent, being soundly based on Christian values, which have a very positive influence on the life of the school. Prayer underpins school life, for example prayers are said at staff meetings.

Relationships within the school are outstanding, and are seen in the school's warm, welcoming, inclusive and friendly atmosphere. They enjoy the praise they get for their achievements, and enjoy celebrating this with each other. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe and secure, and support each other, for example through the very effective prefect system, whereby all year 6 pupils take responsibility for helping younger pupils keep to understand and obey the rules.

Pupils learn from the outstanding role models of staff and other adults, who help them develop self-confidence and independence. Behaviour management is excellent, and as a result pupils' behaviour is also excellent. They have a say in making the rules, so they understand and respect them, and know the consequences if rules are broken. A spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation is very evident in behaviour management.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and a strong awareness and concern for the needs of others. A new policy for spiritual and moral development has been written, with a view to enhancing a shared understanding of how such development can be promoted across the wider curriculum.

The School Council gives pupils a real say in running the school, which they value highly. They are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through diet and exercise, and they are also very aware of the need to look after the environment. Pupils are very aware of the needs of others, and are enthusiastic fund-raisers for a very wide range of local and international charitable causes.

The Christian identity of the school is evident in many ways, such as crosses in the hall, foyer and classrooms, prayers and Bible passages on wall displays, a 'prayer box' for children's prayers, and in numerous high quality displays around the school.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding.

Collective Worship is outstanding. All pupils and staff attend, and worship has a very positive impact on school life, being soundly based on the Christian gospel. It always includes singing, teaching, and time for prayer and reflection. Staff lead most acts of worship, along with other visiting leaders from local churches. Unfortunately the Anglican church has been without a vicar for over a year, so links between church and school have been limited, but a new vicar has just been appointed and the school plans to rebuild the excellent relationships it formerly had with the church. Staff have had recent training for leading worship.

Collective Worship is exceptionally well planned by the worship co-ordinator, with support from the music leader. Worship is built round weekly themes and reflects the Church year. A visual focus with candles, a bible and other items mark Collective Worship as a special part of the school day. The school plans to further improve the physical environment for worship.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy worship, and value it as an integral part of the school day. They value the opportunities for quiet reflection, and can relate what they experience in worship to their everyday life in school and at home. They can talk about stories from the Bible, and relate them to their own lives. They love contributing to worship, and enjoy taking part in different ways, for example by acting stories, playing music, or planning or leading worship. Pupil surveys confirm the importance they place on worship.

Pupils have a very mature understanding of the range of purposes and styles of prayer, such as praise, giving thanks, asking for help, saying 'sorry' and asking for forgiveness. They would like even more opportunities to write their own prayers to use during Collective Worship. They know the Lord's Prayer and the school prayer, grace is said before lunch, and the day ends with prayer.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is outstanding.

Standards in Religious Education are outstanding. Lessons are exceptionally well planned, in accordance with the new RE syllabus which is being introduced, and supplemented by 'home grown' elements to enhance RE, such as units on ecumenism. Very effective assessment procedures are in place, giving praise and encouragement to pupils. Teachers' planning is very well differentiated in accordance with pupils' abilities, including extension work for the very able. Lessons are interesting, exciting and well paced.

Resources are excellent, and are used effectively, including using local church leaders as a resource to enhance pupils' knowledge. Once the new vicar is in place, the school plans to develop more emphasis on Anglican faith and tradition. The co-ordinator gives excellent support to other staff, for example by giving them training on teaching Islam. Staff feel confident in their teaching, knowing that support is available if needed.

Pupils enjoy the range of teaching styles and methods of learning used, and their work is of a very high standard. They discuss their work readily, and show excellent understanding of their lessons. They are able to apply what they have learnt in RE to other areas of the curriculum, and to their own spiritual and personal development. Links are made between what they learn in RE and what they experience in Collective Worship. Sometimes a whole day is dedicated to RE, leading to a special act of worship.

Christianity is the predominant faith of pupils, with no other faiths significantly represented. Judaism, Islam and Hinduism are the other main religions studied. Adults from other faiths and cultures are invited to tell pupils about the similarities and differences between faiths and cultures, and there is a strong emphasis on making such comparisons. Pupils' work and progress is monitored and evaluated regularly by the subject leader and headteacher. No pupils are withdrawn from RE.

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

The school promotes its Christian foundation exceptionally well. A Foundation governor described it as Christ being the centre of the school. Headteacher, staff and governors are committed to the personal development and well-being of all pupils, with pupils' spiritual, moral and social development a high priority, and they lead by example in giving care and support to pupils and staff. The staff recruitment process makes the nature of the church school clear to applicants. As a result, many of the staff place supreme importance on their role as Christian leaders and role models.

Staff are very positive about the excellent strong leadership and management from the headteacher and governing body. Two Foundation governors have had recent training in their role. The governing body's committee system is very effective in managing the governors' workload, so that all governors are fully informed about the work of the school. As a result, governors have identified a need to monitor the impact of the school's Christian foundation on pupils. Staff feel well supported, for example they have access to counselling should they need it.

The lack of a Vicar has had a negative impact on the links with the church, but the newly appointed Vicar is expected to help rebuild these links. Meanwhile, a number of other denominations have given a lot of support, for example by leading Collective Worship, and this has helped to lessen the impact.

Parents speak very highly of the family atmosphere generated through the school's caring relationships, and are very happy with their school, which they describe as excellent. They feel well informed about the school's activities. The views of parents, staff and pupils are sought through surveys and the School Council. The school is held in very high regard by its wider community, and links between them are very good, as are links with other church denominations. For example, the St John's school Victory Club collects and cares for pupils after school, and pupils visit local residents to sing carols at Christmas. Liaison with the schools pupils will move to are excellent, and pupils are well prepared for the change, through occasional visits to the schools and sharing information about pupils' abilities and needs.

Issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed effectively, and the school's self evaluation provides a very accurate and strong foundation for future developments.

St Johns Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School Victory Road, Ipswich Suffolk IP44 LE
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