

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Stonham Aspal Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

The Street  
Stonham Aspal  
Stowmarket  
IP14 6AF

#### **Diocese St Edmundsbury & Ipswich**

LA : Suffolk

Date of inspection: 24 April 2008

Date of last inspection: November 2003

School's unique reference number: 124772

Name of Headteacher: Paul Hesketh

Name of Inspector: Simon Windmill

NS number: 182

### **Context**

Stonham Aspal Church of England VA primary school serves the village of Stonham Aspal and the surrounding area. It has links with its parish church, which is very close to the school. It is of average size. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups or with disabilities or learning difficulties is below average.

### **Summary Judgement**

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stonham Aspal as a Church of England school are good.**

The school's Christian ethos and values are embedded in school life and have a strong positive influence on pupils' values and attitudes. The supportive and caring relationships within and between pupils and staff are excellent.

### **Established strengths**

- The Christian ethos and values, shown in the high level of care and nurture provided for all
- Excellent displays, reflecting the high value placed on the school's Christian foundation
- Pupils' good behaviour

### **Focus for development**

- Give support and encouragement to the new collective worship co-ordinator in her role, building on the current good practice in collective worship
- Develop areas for quiet reflection inside and outside the school building
- Develop effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of religious education and collective worship on pupils

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

The school's Christian ethos is regarded by the headteacher, staff and governors as a fundamentally important part of school life. Care and support for pupils and staff are very good, and reflect the Christian values on which the school is based. This is seen in the school's warm, welcoming, inclusive and friendly atmosphere, in which pupils feel valued as individuals. Staff provide good Christian role models for pupils.

Pupils' perception surveys confirm this, with comments such as 'This is a great school', and 'I've been to lots of schools, and this is the best!' Parent surveys also show high levels of satisfaction with the school. Pupils get on exceptionally well with each other, and with the staff, who provide good role models. These excellent relationships help pupils develop self-confidence and independence. Pupils like coming to school, and enjoy their lessons.

Pupils' behaviour is good. This is because the older pupils are involved in setting the rules for their classes, and therefore respect them, and understand the consequences if they are broken. Some younger pupils were less certain about the rules and consequences. Lapses in good behaviour are rare, and are always dealt with quickly and effectively. A few pupils said that behaviour on the playground was not always as good as they would like.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The headteacher, staff and governors see spiritual and moral development as a vital part of pupils' learning, and encourage this by giving pupils opportunities for such development in collective worship and the wider curriculum.

The school environment is used well to contribute to pupils' spiritual and moral development, for example many excellent displays based on religious education and collective worship, including a Prayer Wall for pupils' prayers. Extra curricular activities include a Bible Explorers group, a Christian holiday club and other Christian groups. The school has plans for creating an outside quiet area for reflection and prayer.

Pupils' awareness and concern for the needs of others is encouraged, and as a result they treat each other with care and respect. They help to raise money for the school. They are also very aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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

Collective worship is seen as the foundation of school life by the head and staff, and is securely based on the Christian gospel. It always includes teaching and time for prayer and reflection, and usually includes singing. Pupils enjoy worship, especially when they have a part to play in it, such as reading a Bible story or a prayer. Anglican responses such as 'Peace be with you...and also with you', or 'The Lord is here...His spirit is with us' are often used, and the Lord's Prayer is used along with the school's own prayers.

Pupils have a good understanding of the range of styles and purposes of prayer, such as saying thank you, asking for help and saying sorry. They would welcome even more involvement in worship. Prayers are also said before lunch and at the end of the day.

Worship is very well planned around themes that reflect the main festivals of the Church year, such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest, along with other 'special' services such as a Leavers' Service. Some of these services are held in the Church. Pupils particularly enjoy the exceptionally good weekly collective worship, led by the Revd Tim, which is lively, stimulating and thought-provoking. Members of other denominations lead collective worship on most Tuesdays, and key stage collective worship is held once a week, with an extra celebration assembly on Friday afternoons.

Some recording, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is done by the governors and the collective worship co-ordinator, but this data is not yet fully used to assess its impact on pupils

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

Religious education is seen as a very important area of learning by teachers, parents and pupils. It is well planned to cover Christianity and other faiths. It complies with the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus. Religious education is also used to link with the Anglican traditions promoted in collective worship.

Pupils enjoy religious education, and make good progress in it. They are able to relate what they learn about Christianity and other faiths to their own lives. Their understanding of different faiths is developed through the stories, rituals and traditions of a wide range of faiths. They are encouraged to deepen their understanding by asking questions of themselves as well as asking their teachers.

Lessons are planned with clear learning objectives. Pupils' work is assessed by themselves, their peers and their teachers. A wide range of activities are used to stimulate learning, such as drama, discussion, individual and group work. This helps to keep pupils interested in their lessons, and gives them opportunities to work in different ways.

Standards of teaching and learning in religious education are good, and sometimes outstanding. For example a lesson on The Good Shepherd made excellent use of Godly Play, and the pupils responded exceptionally well, with thoughtful questions and comments.

The role of the newly appointed RE co-ordinator is to review the planning and teaching of the subject, to ensure that all teachers can deliver high quality RE, with extra training if necessary.

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

The headteacher gives good leadership to the school, and is very well supported by his staff and governors. The headteacher, staff and governors promote a distinctive and active Christian vision for the school, with Christian values underpinning its life and work.

The school's brochure, website, policies for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and collective worship, staff recruitment procedures, and the stimulating displays around the school all effectively contribute to the strong Christian influence seen in all aspects of the school's life.

The staff feel valued and involved in the school's development. They all work well together, and enjoy the support given by the governors. This contributes greatly to the happy and supportive atmosphere among staff.

The partnership between the school, the church and the wider community is good, and highly valued by all. Links with the Church are particularly close, and members of other denominations support the school in various ways. The incumbent has an effective pastoral role in the school.

Questionnaires, surveys, and informal conversations confirm that parents and members of the wider community hold the school in very high regard. One means of finding out parents' views is the 'Three Stars and a Wish' survey, which invites parents to write the three things they like best about the school, and one improvement they would like to see. Results show that parents generally are very happy with the school and feel that the successful and purposeful atmosphere is generated through the school's caring Christian relationships.

Parents and the wider community feel well informed about the school's activities, and enjoy the fact that they are positively encouraged to get involved in its life in a number of ways. Parents also have opportunities for training, for example in learning how to help pupils develop their reading skills.

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