

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Sutton on the Forest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Main Street  
Sutton-on-the-Forest  
York  
YO61 1DW

#### **Diocese: York**

Local authority: North Yorkshire County Council  
Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008  
Date of last inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> November – 4<sup>th</sup> December 1998  
School's unique reference number: 121518  
Headteacher: Mrs Joyce Botham  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs C A Roberts 469

#### **School context**

This is a small school with 91 pupils on roll that serves the village of Sutton-on-the-Forest and also attracts pupils from the surrounding area. Pupils come from a varied range of social and economic backgrounds. Nearly all pupils are White British with a small number of Traveller children with a Gypsy-Roma heritage. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is low, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties. Several awards have been received by the school including Activemark, Healthy Schools, Basic Skills and the local authority's Highly Effective School award.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sutton-on-the-Forest as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The school's distinctive Christian ethos and strong mission statement have a very good impact on the school community. Children not only gain good academic results but they grow spiritually and develop a strong sense of social and moral responsibility. Relationships throughout school are excellent. Strong, productive links with the local church enhance the experience of the school community.

#### **Established strengths**

- The quality of relationships between and among pupils and staff, which reflect the school's Christian values
- The centrality of worship and prayer to the life of the school and its impact on pupils
- The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher and senior teacher in developing the school's Christian distinctiveness

#### **Focus for development**

- Involve pupils and foundation governors in monitoring and evaluating collective worship.
- Access training for foundation governors to further impact on the church school distinctiveness.

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

Christian values have a positive impact on all members of the community. Pupils talk about 'the kind people that are here' and 'how peaceful, loving and caring school is'. They make very good progress academically and in terms of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The mission statement, underpinned by Christian values, is understood and supported by all. Adults are excellent role models for pupils and there are strong, supportive relationships between and among children and staff, effectively reflecting the Christian character of the school. The impact of care and love means pupils feel highly valued and very special. This is further enhanced through teachers designing fun lessons and the many exciting initiatives that take place such as links with a school in Morocco, participating in 'Young Voices' and the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) family evening. Pupils are confident, independent, and exceptionally courteous. They support each other,

have a real sense of pride in their school and are keen to learn. Vibrant displays, including excellent sculptures of the nativity, and the interactive prayer board support religious education (RE), the Christian ethos and enable children to link ethos to curriculum and worship. RE is particularly important to the school and the impact on pupils is very good. For example pupils are encouraged to ask ultimate questions and discuss their personal opinions. Tracking systems show that standards are high in RE.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship has a central place in the life of the school, and is seen as vitally important by everyone. It is a very special time in the daily life of school. Pupils recognise the importance of worship in a church school and link it to the way they behave. For example, 'it helps us to be still and calm'. Planning is extremely thoughtful and imaginative to ensure that all acts of worship aid the spiritual development of pupils. Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) themes linked to Christian Gospel values, together with festivals and celebrations in the church year, form the basis for worship. Other faith celebrations are also included. The presence of God is acknowledged through the use of symbol, beautiful music, imaginative prayer and thought-provoking delivery. Opportunity for reflection is excellent. For example using music from Holy Island and asking pupils to think about the love of God surrounding them. This has significant impact on pupils' spiritual development. Attitudes to worship are exemplary, with pupils participating in all acts of worship through action songs, readings, question and answer. Pupils are also given time to question. Pupils have opportunity to plan and lead worship for class based acts, which link to all aspects of the curriculum. Worship is also fun and active. For example pupils talk of the use of squeaky puppets, and other props to illustrate themes particularly concerning relationships. Staff lead and share fully in the worship, demonstrating to children the importance adults place on nurturing faith. The vicar has an excellent relationship with the school and enthusiastically leads worship every week, either in school or church. This helps learners to develop understanding of Anglican faith and practice, as do other strategies such as church and school using the same prayers. Parents and children greatly appreciate the vicars' involvement and give positive examples of his input to worship that is both enjoyable and builds on the development of Christian values. The headteacher and senior teacher formally monitor the impact of worship. However, pupils and foundation governors are not yet involved in this process.

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

The strong leadership of the headteacher has enabled the school community to work well together, to develop and promote its distinctive Christian character. She has enabled a strong staff team to flourish, whilst building close partnerships with governors and the local church community, who fully support the school's mission and aims. The Christian vision for the school is clear and firmly underpins the mission statement. It is effectively communicated to the whole community in, for example, the weekly newsletter and in policy documents. All staff receive in-house training in church school aspects such as SIAS and Godly Play. The headteacher and senior teacher attend the annual diocesan conference in order to further impact upon the distinctiveness of the school. Monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school has been accurately and rigorously undertaken via the SIAS toolkit and is well linked to school improvement planning. The leadership team is very clear about what strategies are needed for improvement. Although the governing body is extremely committed and supportive of the school as a church school, they have not yet participated in formal monitoring of the distinctiveness of the school. Plans are being developed for recently appointed foundation governors to access diocesan training on their roles and responsibilities. Parents speak overwhelmingly of their appreciation of the head and staff, the high quality of education and the special family atmosphere that exists in school. They value the way the school promotes a Christian ethos which impacts on children's behaviour and awareness of themselves and others. Links with the church community are very strong, not only through the regular involvement of the vicar, but also through other Christians who lead youth groups and develop Godly Play with pupils. The school also hosts an annual celebration and family worship time for local parishes on Education Sunday.