

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Wetheringsett Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Street,
Wetheringsett,
Suffolk,
IP14 5PJ

Diocese: St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk
Dates of inspection: 5th December 2006
Date of last inspection: 4th and 5th July 2001
School's unique reference number: 124746
Headteacher: Mrs. Laura Jestico
Inspector's name and number: Robert Miller 357

School context

Wetheringsett is a very small school in rural Suffolk that was built in 1859. There have been two extensions to the original building. In 2002 an ICT suite was added and in 2006 a classroom for the younger children was extended. There are 63 pupils on roll, between the ages of 4 and 11 years. 50 per cent of pupils live within the catchment area of the school. All pupils, with the exception of three, are White and from British backgrounds. Pupils are taught in three classes. The head teacher, a practising Christian, took up her post in 2003.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wetheringsett as a Church of England school are good.

Wetheringsett is a happy and friendly school where the relationships between staff and children are excellent. This makes learning an enjoyable and sometimes an inspirational experience. The head teacher has created a Christ-centred ethos in the school that emphasises love and caring for each other. This has a positive effect on the pupils, particularly in the way they behave towards each other. Links between the school and the church are not as strong as they could be because either Clergy have only been recently appointed or have been on sick leave. They also have commitments to a number of other schools in the area.

Established strengths

- Excellent relationships and support of pupils by adults at the school.
- The excellent provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Well-planned Acts of Collective Worship that include pupil's participation.
- The wide range of opportunities provided through enrichment of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Focus for development

- Ensure closer links with Clergy, Parochial Church Council and use of the local Church.
- Develop formal monitoring and evaluation procedures for Collective Worship in order to identify further areas for improvement.
- To increase pupil awareness of other faiths and cultures develop a programme of visiting speakers and visits to places of worship.
- More distinctive signage at the school entrance.

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

Wetheringsett is a very happy, caring school where the staff act as excellent role models. Children are secure in the knowledge that they are respected, valued and listened to by adults in the school. Pupils love coming to school and enjoy their learning opportunities. Those pupils with learning difficulties are very well cared for and supported, as they seek to fulfil their potential. The Christian identity in the school is strong and is emphasised as soon as you walk through the entrance doors. There is an excellent wall display emphasising the Christian ethos and Values shared by the school community. However the sign at the entrance to the driveway to the school does not give the same emphasis to Wetheringsett being a Church of England school. Wall displays and books of a Christian nature are evident throughout the school and enhance both the ethos and identity of the school. The school is committed to the development of the whole child through its "Train of Values" project. This is helping to develop the social and emotional aspects of learning and gives significance to Christian values such as commitment, hope, love, peace and charity. A website link is being developed with a school in the Middle East and children's poetry exchanged on the theme of "Peace and Reconciliation". The atmosphere around the school is very orderly and children are very polite and well mannered. Pupils are eager to show visitors all the work that is on display and they are proud of their school. The vast majority take part in a wide assortment of after-school clubs. Pupils are able to contribute their ideas and concerns through the School Council and have been able to effect change.

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

The lack of space in school requires Acts of Collective Worship to take place in the nearby village hall. Great care is taken to ensure that Acts of Worship take place in a well-organised and peaceful environment. Pupils say that this is the one time during the school day when they have the opportunity to sit in silence and reflect. They enjoy being able to take part in re-enactments of Gospel stories and sing hymns. They devise prayers of their own using computers in ICT lessons, and publish them in a schoolbook for reading at times of Worship and before and after lunch. Worship makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development, by making them reflect on the issues of the day and think more deeply about their relationships with each other and the wider world.

The Clergy lead the Worship from time to time. Worship includes Christian symbols such as a lighted candle and a Bible as foci and this is effective in capturing pupils' imaginations. It is well planned and co-ordinated, involving all staff in the discussions as to what "Themes" should take place. The school has identified the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about faiths and cultures other than their own. Visits to other places of Worship and a programme of speakers from other faiths are being developed. The issues raised, concerning Act of Collective Worship, in the previous Diocesan Inspection report, have been addressed.

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

The quality of the leadership of the head teacher, a practising Christian, contributes significantly to the success of the school. Together with the staff and governors, she promotes the Christian vision for the school. Pupils act this out daily, for example, by reciting prayers before meals and at the beginning and end of the school day. The school's management team and governors are establishing clear systems that inform the school's self-evaluation process. However, governors and staff, whilst having an informal monitoring role, have not yet developed formal assessment and monitoring procedures for Acts of Collective Worship. School policies express its Christian purpose and school rules are couched in terms of forgiveness and mutual respect. The school staff work closely as a team and they receive strong support from its leaders. They share the Christian vision for the school, as do most parents and pupils, who are surveyed for their views. Parents speak very highly of all that the school does to ensure their child flourishes as an individual. After-school clubs organised by staff, for sport and art are a strength of the school. The Clergy currently

are intermittent visitors and links between the school and the PCC are tenuous. The local Church is used for some school events but both school and Clergy have identified a need for its greater use as a learning resource. That said, the village does regard the school as an integral part of the local community and supports its fund raising events.

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