

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Willoughby St Helena's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Main Road
Willoughby
Alford
Lincolnshire
LN13 9NH

Diocese: Lincoln

Local authority: Lincolnshire

Dates of inspection: 23rd January 2008

Date of previous inspection: February 2002

School's unique reference number: 120587

Headteacher: Mrs Sue Belton

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Yvonne Shaw NS 245

School context

St Helena's Primary School is a small rural school of 93 pupils including early years pupils. The school serves the village of Willoughby and its surrounding area. Almost all pupils are white British and none speak English as an additional language. There is a high proportion of special needs children. Daily after-school care facility is provided by the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Helena's as a Church of England school are good.

The school's Christian ethos permeates the life of the school. Staff, children, parents and governors are all valued as 'partners in learning'. This has been nurtured by the current Headteacher who leads a school, which is characterised by the valuing of each individual enabling them to develop in a spiritually stimulating, safe and secure environment.

Established strengths

- The Headteacher's leadership and vision, firmly rooted in a strong Christian commitment enabling all to flourish within a safe and secure environment.
- The inclusive Christian ethos in which pupils and staff are highly valued and achievement of all within the school is celebrated.
- Well planned collective worship, placed at the heart of the school day and provides a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Outstanding behaviour, supported by effective policies and procedures, in which children are encouraged to seek resolution to their issues.

Focus for development

- Formalise regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of collective worship, church school distinctiveness and religious education.
- Use judgements from monitoring and evaluation to complete and update the church schools' SEF.
- Develop the children's understanding of prayer and of the significance of prayer and reflection in their own lives, providing further opportunities for groups to share prayer.

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

The school succeeds as a caring Christian community by placing much importance upon the relationships necessary for effective learning. All learners in this school are valued and this is rooted in a strong Christian commitment from staff and governors. There is much evidence of Christian values in the relationships between the staff and children and among the children. For example the children have an effective, highly trained buddy system to support lonely

children and to resolve conflict. Effective behaviour policy and procedures are in place to support and encourage children to seek resolution to their issues. Parents commented 'values are living at this school and modelled by the adults in it.' The outstanding behaviour of the pupils and attitudes to learning are exemplified in their strong moral and social understanding, which is attributable to the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils are encouraged to develop empathy for the needs of others. There is an emphasis on the 'whole child' and treating every child as an individual. Children state that they value the opportunities to 'say what they think' and describe their school as 'fantastic'. In lessons most of the children concentrate well on their work and contribute enthusiastically. In Religious Education, children are encouraged to have an understanding of God and a cross curricular approach is beginning to be introduced to this subject. For example 'Beautiful World, Wonderful God' has been explicitly linked to the Geography theme which brings alive the relevance of faith and religion. High profile is given to encouraging a healthy lifestyle including spiritual growth. The school uses its environment effectively to encourage spiritual development by providing opportunities for the children to develop and improve the school grounds, work outside and hold collective worship outside.

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

Worship is central to the life of this school and has a good impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It has a strong Christian focus through the use of Bible stories and Christian symbols and there are opportunities for reflection through prayer and music. Worship is well planned by the co-ordinator, led by school staff, weekly visits from the vicar, and includes some participation by the children. Although there is a clear plan for Collective Worship, staff are free to deviate from the theme to accommodate local, national or world issues. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their participation in Church services for major festivals which helps them to grow in understanding and have a positive attitude to collective worship. Children appreciate the variation of seating arrangements for the acts of worship held in school, for example when they sit in mixed age family groups. Worship would be enhanced by themes being followed up in class such as developing understanding of prayer and of the significance of prayer in their own lives. Some monitoring of collective worship takes place, involving Governors and this is being included in the school development planning process. However, the co-ordinator needs time to evaluate the impact of collective worship and include this in the church schools' self evaluation form (SEF). The inclusion of parents in collective worship once a week helps reinforce the important place it holds within the school community.

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

As a result of the headteacher's clear Christian vision which is derived from her personal conviction, strong leadership is provided to this church school. This is supported very well by staff and governors. However, the school's Christian vision, although securely held by staff and governors is not clearly explained in policy documents. The co-ordinator for collective worship and religious education monitors her subjects but insufficient time is allocated to evaluating the impact of the work and recording these evaluations in the church schools' SEF. There are very good links with the local church and community demonstrated by exceptional parishioner attendance at the first open air carol service held on the village green. To support the school's travel plan, the local pub encourages the use of their car park by parents. The headteacher, staff and governors hold in high regard their excellent relationship with the Diocesan Board of Education and value the in service training provided in supporting them in identifying their next steps for development. Parents trust that the school will deal with issues fairly and hold the school in high regard. They comment that 'we are lucky to be here' and 'you cannot measure the value this school gives our children'. Parents have the opportunity to attend weekly good work assembly and are kept fully informed as to initiatives in the school. Active school councillors report regularly to their peers and feel involved in strategic thinking about the school. A teaching assistant plans SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) material and combines Christian values such as respect and humility into the planning and delivery of this programme.