

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Yaxham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Norwich Road  
Clint Green  
Yaxham  
Dereham  
NR19 1RU

#### **Diocese: Norwich**

Local authority: Norfolk  
Date of inspection: 3 April 2009  
Date of last inspection: July 2005  
School's unique reference number: 121129  
Headteacher: Sandra Nightingale  
Inspector's name and number: Simon Windmill 182

#### **School context**

Yaxham is a small rural primary school of 76 pupils serving the village of Yaxham and its surrounding area. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties, emotional needs and special educational needs is well above average. The school has been awarded Activemark and National Healthy School status.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Yaxham as a Church of England school are good**

The school's Christian ethos is apparent in all aspects of its life and work, making a great contribution to the school's happy and caring atmosphere. Pupils enjoy being at school, and value their good relationships with staff and each other. Under the leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors work very well as a mutually supportive team.

#### **Established strengths**

- Collective worship, which feeds the school's Christian values and underpins its life and work
- The high quality of behaviour and relationships
- Links with the school's wider community

#### **Focus for development**

- Develop the creative curriculum, linking different subjects together
- Support the Vicar as she undertakes leading collective worship
- Widen the involvement in evaluation of the impact of collective worship on pupils

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

The school's Christian ethos is seen by the headteacher, staff and governors as a vital part of school life. Care and support for pupils and staff are outstanding, and reflect the school's Christian values. This is seen in the school's warm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere, in which pupils feel valued and safe.

Staff, parents and governors comment on the school's family atmosphere. The school works very effectively with the high number of pupils with special educational needs, and these pupils say that their teachers give lots of help with their learning. The school has a strong reputation for its inclusivity and the individual care offered to all pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, reflecting the school's Christian values. Pupils understand, respect and obey the school rules, and value the fact that they have a say in what the rules should be. They get on very well with each other, and with the staff, who provide good role models. These relationships greatly help pupils develop self-confidence and independence. They enjoy their lessons.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They value the opportunities provided for quiet reflection, both in collective worship and at other times, and the school has created prayer corners in each class for this purpose.

Pupils' awareness and concern for the needs of others is encouraged, and they willingly help to raise money for a number of charities, ranging from Children in Need to the East Anglian Air Ambulance.

### **The impact of collective worship is good**

Collective worship is outstanding. The head, staff and pupils see it as a central part of school life, and it is soundly based on Christian values. It always includes prayer, singing and teaching.

Collective worship on the last day of term was a very meaningful and moving account of the events of Easter week, written and delivered by pupils. This was used later in the day within an excellent production celebrating Easter, which parents and visitors greatly enjoyed.

Pupils enjoy worship, valuing the many opportunities they have to take part. They often use their own written or extempore prayers, and have a good understanding of the purposes of prayer, such as saying thank you, saying sorry, asking for help or healing, and forgiveness. They would welcome even more opportunities to contribute to worship in this and other ways. Prayers are also said at other times in the day.

A candle and cross provide a visual focus to enhance worship and to mark it as a special part of the day. Worship is well planned around themes that reflect the main festivals of the Church year, some of which are held in the church, such as Christmas, Lent, Easter and Harvest, Ash Wednesday and a leavers' service at the end of the school year. All staff attend and help lead worship. The Vicar has recently led collective worship for the first time, and is planning to develop her role and skills in this.

The school keeps records of worship, and plans to extend the range of people involved in its evaluation.

### **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, and is based on the Norfolk Agreed Syllabus. The subject leader is an inspirational RE teacher, and the whole school benefits from his skills and enthusiasm.

Pupils enjoy religious education, and make good progress in it, comparable to progress across the curriculum. 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 range of faiths. They are encouraged to deepen their understanding by asking questions of themselves as well as asking their teachers.

Lessons are well planned, and a wide range of activities is 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. For example, in a lesson on Easter week, groups of pupils wrote excellent poems on different parts of the Easter story, which then formed part of collective worship and the end of term assembly.

The religious education curriculum is well resourced with suitable artefacts from a range of faiths, and pupils enjoy learning from the artefacts available. Sufficient time is allocated to religious education. The church is sometimes used as a resource for RE, but its distance from the school limits the number of such visits.

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

The headteacher gives excellent leadership to the school, and is well supported by the teachers and governors. She has a clear vision for the school, and is committed to maintaining the Christian ethos of the school.

Staff and governors all make good contributions to the life of the school, and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The school's Christian identity is reflected in displays of children's work, much of which illustrates RE work.

The staff feel valued and involved in the school's development. They work very well together as a team, and provide mutual support for each other. Teachers commented on the very high quality of the school's Teaching Assistants – one teacher described them as 'Just fantastic!'

This contributes greatly to the happy, supportive atmosphere of the school, as does the staff well being programme, which is much appreciated. Parental surveys indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the school.

The strong links with the local church and community support the headteacher and staff in promoting a distinctive Christian vision, with Christian values underpinning its life and work. For example, the church donates bibles for all school leavers. Relationships with parents are also very strong, supporting the school in many ways.

Recommendations from the previous inspection were 'to ensure continuity of Christian values when moving to new accommodation', 'continue to care', 'develop resources', and 'give opportunities for reflection and observing church confirmations and Eucharist'. These are in place, except observing confirmations and Eucharist proved impractical. The school's self-assessment is accurate, and provides a good basis for further developments.