



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Blakeney Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Wiveton Road
Blakeney
Holt
Norfolk
NR25 7NJ

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk
Dates of inspection: 24 and 29 June 2009
Date of last inspection: 29 June and 7 July 2006
School's unique reference number: 121108
Headteacher: Mrs Sue du Bois
Inspector's name : Mrs Constance M Tyce

School context

Blakeney Church of England Primary School is a small village school serving Blakeney and a number of neighbouring villages in the Glaven Valley. There are 49 children on roll aged between 4 and 11 years. Almost all children are from White British backgrounds. The school is in partnership with another small Church of England school in the village of Hindringham.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Blakeney Primary as a Church of England school are good

Blakeney Primary is well established as a church school and is highly regarded in the community. The good quality of pastoral care reflects the Christian values that underpin the work of the school. Parents value the difference the school makes to the way the children achieve and develop as people.

Established strengths

- The good relationships and value placed on every individual within the school.
- The excellent links with the parish church of St Nicholas and the support given by the local clergy.
- The enthusiasm and vision of the headteacher and governors which encourage and strengthen the church ethos within the school community.

Focus for development

- Seek ways to develop the classroom environments so they reflect the spiritual qualities the school wishes to promote.
- Devise formal procedures to monitor and evaluate religious education, collective worship and the impact of the Christian character of the school on the children's learning and personal development and report the results regularly to governors.

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

The Christian ethos of the school promotes good relationships within the whole school community. Strong pastoral care and support from the headteacher, governors and clergy, relates directly to the Christian foundation of the school and enables children, staff and parents to feel very welcome and respected as unique individuals. The spiritual life of everyone in the school is considered to be important. This has enabled a secure and calm atmosphere that allows for open and honest approaches to discussions between children, staff and other adults who visit the school.

The school is very effective in living out its Christian values in the parish and community where it successfully provides experiences to broaden and deepen the children's understanding of Christianity and enhances the connection between church and school. Parents say that the emphasis on Christian values makes a real difference to them and their children. Children enjoy their regular visits to the church to explore Anglican traditions and celebrate together with their parents key Christian festivals. Participation in these services increases pupils' confidence.

Children were keen to express their pride in their school and say 'it is like one big family'. The Christian ethos pervades all aspects of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is good. Collective worship and religious education lessons enable children to be open and enquiring about matters of faith, belief and attitudes to life. The school environment is attractive and well cared for, however the classroom environment does not reflect the spiritual qualities the school wishes to promote. Spiritual development was greatly enhanced when recently the children creatively designed pictures of their ideas for future churches, as part of the 'Art Alive' exhibition.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a very important part of the school day. A comprehensive policy has clear objectives and procedures, which support collective worship in giving a foundation for life in a Christian, caring atmosphere. 'Our collective worship is fun'. This comment reflects the views of learners who spoke about the actions they have learnt to do when saying the Lord's Prayer and the Grace. Children participate enthusiastically; respond to questions, sing, write and say prayers. On the morning of the inspection the children were very excited as the Bishop attended the worship and spoke to all the children. The headteacher and priest in charge regularly meet to plan for collective worship. The broad range of themes is effective in giving children opportunities to consider how stories from the Bible are relevant to their own lives. The use of humour, in addition to thought provoking questions, means that the behaviour is very good. Children respond well to acts of worship and show an appropriate reverence when they pray. Collective Worship is wholly Anglican in character and is supported by the use of the cross and candle. The children have a good knowledge of the use of symbols in worship and this is reinforced when they visit the church to celebrate various Christian festivals.

Parents appreciate joining the school to celebrate Christian festivals. One parent said that although not a regular churchgoer, she looked forward to these celebrations in the church. Occasionally the children have been enabled to participate in the Communion Service. The headteacher believes that sharing communion together is a very special time in the life of the school. At present there are informal ways of monitoring and evaluating collective worship but the governors are not always informed of the impact on the Christian character of the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of achievement in Religious Education (RE) are good. By the time they leave school some children have made good progress and their attainment is above national expectations. The teaching of RE has much improved over the last few years and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly in Key Stage 2. The effective assessment system now provides evidence of children's attainment. However, at present the assessments are not being used to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in RE.

The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good. Lessons are well prepared and supported by the priest in charge on a weekly basis. Staff have a good understanding of the focus for the lesson and this ensures that children make progress in relation to the lesson outcomes. A wide range of learning strategies means that children enjoy learning particularly when they are engaged in first hand experiences. In the lesson observed during the inspection children used famous paintings and their Bibles to look up references to find out more about Jesus' disciples. Children have plenty of opportunities to express their views and opinions in RE and to reflect on what it means to them. The enthusiasm of the teaching and the care given to the scope of the learning activities helps to create the positive attitudes that children show towards RE.

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

The headteacher and priest in charge/chair of governors share an enthusiastic and passionate vision for the school and how it can improve further. They provide good Christian leadership and have a firm commitment to the school as a Church of England school. This has an impact on the quality of relationships throughout the school and particularly the way everyone is encouraged to care for each other. The headteacher is very approachable and with her gentle, open style of management she is drawing others along with her. The result is a school that is fostering a sense of community and trust based on Christian values.

The governors recognise the distinctive nature of the school and feel that the Christian ethos underpins their work as they offer support and challenge. Governors frequently visit the school and attend collective worship. They have a good understanding of the school but there are insufficient opportunities to inform governors of the impact of the Christian character of the school on the children's learning and personal development. The headteacher and lead teacher are working hard with the governors to provide the school with good quality systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating school improvement.

Parents are extremely supportive of the school. They are invited to provide feedback to the school through questionnaires and the 'Parents' Forum'. They feel welcome in school and value the approachability of the staff. They very much appreciate the opportunities children have to explore issues of faith. Parents also praised the impact of the involvement of the clergy in the life of the school and in the lives of adults and children. The 'Messy Church' sessions after school have been a great success and are enjoyed by all the family.

The links with the church are outstanding. These are fostered as a very important two-way partnership and the school values greatly the support from the clergy and parishioners. For example, the church has started to provide breakfast for the children and their families. There are also very good links with the Diocese who provide advice and support.