



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Dereham Church of England Infant School and Nursery

St. Withburga Lane
Dereham
Norfolk
NR19 1ED

Diocese: Diocese of Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk
Date of inspection: 14th May 2009
Dates of last inspection: 19th – 20th June 2006
School's unique reference number: 121195
Headteacher: Karen Gay
Inspector's name and number: Marika Mears

School context

Dereham Church of England Infant School and Nursery is a large school serving the local community of Dereham, a small market town near Norwich. The large majority of pupils are White British. Just under 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group of whom speak Portuguese as their first language. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school is part way through a large building project to improve teaching and learning facilities. The school has gained a number of national awards such as Eco Schools and Artsmark.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dereham Church of England Infants School and Nursery as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Christian values and attitudes are embedded in the school's mission statement. They are put into action so effectively within the school community that pupils are enabled to fully develop and achieve their potential. The school's Christian ethos is at the heart of school life and relationships within the school and the wider school community are of a very high order.

Established strengths

- The very strong and firmly established Christian ethos in which pupils are nurtured as individuals.
- The highest quality relationships between staff, pupils and the wider school community.
- The high quality of Religious Education (RE) teaching which directly contributes to pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and moral development.
- The inspirational Head Teacher and staff team who act as excellent role models of Christian values, exemplified in every aspect of school life.

Focus for development

- Devise a policy for Spiritual Development based on the excellent established practice and opportunities in school.
- Develop links with other churches locally and establish a good relationship with the new clergy, shortly to be appointed.
- Develop collective worship opportunities that incorporate new resources and pupil involvement.

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

The school's commitment to develop the whole child is realised in its practice and emphasis on Christian values. This is evident in every aspect of the school's life, from the care and quality of displays and outstanding teaching to the sensitive development of the fabric of the building. The school has developed a vibrant and creative curriculum providing personalised learning for its pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs and on the Gifted and Talented register, ensuring its practice is inclusive. There is a very strong sense of community, as exemplified by the support for bereaved families, both from the school and the clergy.

Pupils, parents and staff place high value upon good relationships within the school. Pupils are very proud that there is no bad behaviour or bullying in the school; in fact their behaviour and manners are outstanding. This was exemplified by pupils ensuring that the Inspector was always invited to join in with their learning activities and welcome to sit with them at lunchtime. Pupils and families from all cultures are fully integrated into school life and speak highly about the Christian care shown to them. Parents and their children enjoy being part of school celebrations and activities such as achievement awards, special themed events and assemblies. Pupils have excellent opportunities for their spiritual development through the carefully planned creative curriculum, multicultural learning activities and the use of the outdoor learning environment. The Governors monitor and evaluate the school's development as a church school and discuss this at each Governors' meeting. Governors and staff act as critical friends to the Head Teacher ensuring that its Christian character is constantly developed and enhanced.

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

The daily act of worship is seen as a time of day for all the school to be together for worship, reflection and prayer. It is well planned and organised with detailed records and monitoring in place, involving school governors. The children are involved in the worship and the school is exploring how this participation can be further advanced, possibly by incorporating the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and Values for Life resources. Pupils greatly enjoy collective worship and recount Bible stories they have heard. They participate with enthusiasm and are happy to explain how the lessons learnt during collective worship can be put into practice during daily life. The school's adoption of "Reflective Storytelling" and philosophy teaching, enables pupils to share quite complex ideas in a supportive and respectful manner.

Until very recently, there were excellent links with the neighbouring church, clergy and wider community. These were seen in action with the clergy leading weekly worship in school and regular use made of the church by pupils, both for worship, celebrations during the Church year and special awards. Parents and the wider community are invited to collective worship, both at school and in the church, and welcome this opportunity to be involved with their school. The school is actively seeking to develop links with other churches in Dereham during the current interregnum. The school has drawn upon the support of the Diocese to link collective worship themes to the new RE curriculum.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

Development of the RE curriculum was an issue raised from the previous inspection. The school has been extremely successful in developing RE in very creative, but meaningful

ways. It draws upon the personal experiences of its young learners to ensure the RE teaching relates to their daily lives. Pupils have a developing knowledge of Christianity and other major religions, and can talk about issues of faith and practice with growing confidence. The subject leaders have undertaken training and have involved all school staff and governors in imaginative development of RE throughout the school. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The lesson observed linked pupils' previous learning through the theme of special places. The plenary involved pupils sitting on prayer mats, reflecting on the prayer flags they had created which expressed Christian values. Reflective Storytelling is embedded throughout the school and provides an excellent opportunity for quiet thought, deeper learning and assessment.

Assessment is very well developed through the tracking of individual progress. School and classroom displays support pupil learning. RE teaching in the Foundation Stage, often through circle time, prepares pupils well for Key Stage 1 by ensuring that the children both learn about and learn from religion.

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

There is a very good and strong working relationship between the Governing Body, the Head Teacher and, previously, the Clergy. The Foundation Governors are aware of the school's Christian foundation and purpose, which are made clear in the school's public documentation and mission statement. This very good relationship between school and parish church is also evident in the way that the school regularly participates in church services and uses the church as a learning resource.

The inspirational Head Teacher leads a highly effective staff team, both teachers and assistants. She provides training, direction, performance management, well-being schemes and the opportunity to pray together in school. Her open style of leadership emanates from very high expectations coupled with an infectious enthusiasm for the further development of the school. She is supported by a highly committed staff, many of whom have strong Christian beliefs. Pupils experience strong Christian role models from adults and the clergy who live out their Christian lives in practice. Staff and parents feel that the school has many special qualities which are distinctly Christian, and that there is a strong feeling of community cohesion. These qualities impact positively on learners by providing them with a strong sense of community, identity, and learning within a very caring ethos. Pupils gain a well rounded education and are well placed to become active citizens in a fast changing 21st century.

SIAS report May 2009, Dereham Church of England Infants School and Nursery, Dereham, NR19 1ED