



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Harleston Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

School Lane
Harleston
Norfolk
IP20 9HG

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk
Dates of inspection: 27/03/2009
Date of last inspection: June 2006
School's unique reference number: 134049
Headteacher: Mr Roger Walsh
Inspector's name and number: Michael Kee 316

School context

Harleston is a larger than average Primary school with 393 pupils on roll. There is a nursery, a reception class and a mixed reception/ year 1 class. The number of pupils requiring learning support or help to cope with a disability is in line with the national average. Having originally been two schools a considerable building programme is in progress which is providing modern teaching rooms and ultimately a new assembly hall. Numbers are rising as a result of new housing within the catchment area.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Harleston primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The school is secure in its church school status and enjoys a vibrant and supportive relationship with the church community and clergy. There is an equally strong and supportive partnership with the local community and other schools. Relationships in the school among pupils and staff are securely based on Christian values and demonstrate great care and respect for each other and the value of learning.

Established strengths

- Staff, leadership and governance are united in their commitment to the Christian ethos
- Pupils are listened to and are able to discuss their ideas with staff and governors
- Enthusiastic support from parents who value the opportunities provided for their children
- Staff provide clear opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils

Focus for development

- Developing 'Open the Book' scheme for collective worship
- Developing 'Values for Life' to provide and underpin more reflective time
- Planning to introduce 'Philosophy' as an opportunity for pupils to develop their thinking, communication and reflective skills

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

Pupils are very aware of the school's church status and were keen to point out the displays in every classroom depicting the Easter story, children's prayers and the Lord's prayer which they use in every act of collective worship. Pupils feel happy and safe in their school and school council members value the opportunities they have to discuss and contribute ideas for development and how to spend money on improving facilities for play areas. They also spoke of the support they receive from their teachers and the many opportunities they enjoy for clubs and activities after school, which currently number twenty seven, and the trips they can take part in every year.

Pupils are very aware of the needs of other people and take a pride in raising funds to support charities, and a schoolboy in Kenya with whom they are in touch. Pupils were able to speak positively about the learning they enjoy with the clergy and other church members when they visit the church and the input from them to collective worship. There is a book of prayers which children have written in the church along with displays of art work. Classrooms and corridors are rich with displays including children's work and their achievements. These achievements are celebrated in the Monday assembly and collective worship time. Support for learners was evident in all classrooms and gifted and talented pupils are provided with time and teacher input to extend their thinking and understanding. Parents speak of the school's caring and supportive ethos and how their children have been welcomed into its community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a focal point of every day and brings together the Christian ethos of the school in a celebration which pupils value and enjoy. They contribute their own prayers; they enjoy the singing, and participate enthusiastically in the delivery of the story. On the day of the inspection collective worship was led by two members of a local evangelical church, one of whom is a foundation governor of the school. The theme for the day was the importance of friendship and several children were directly involved in acting out the story while everyone was invited to respond to questions, which they did with enthusiasm and understanding. The atmosphere in collective worship was very respectful with music playing for entering and leaving the hall.

Pupils evaluate their experience of collective worship regularly and were able to relate the theme of friendship to their view of the school which is very much about supporting each other to be happy and reaching out to help others in need. Anglican faith and practice were clearly illustrated with the cross displayed, the use of the Lord's prayer and the hymn, together with the backdrop of display work on Holy week and the Easter story. The impact of collective worship is significant throughout the school with related themes displayed in classrooms. These are used to stimulate discussion and support spiritual development. Collective worship is reflected each day in every classroom where prayers before lunch and at the end of the day bring each class together for quiet moments of reflection and thanksgiving.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The religious education (RE) policy and schemes of work are based on the Norfolk agreed syllabus and staff have received training from the Diocese to support their planning. The RE co-ordinator works with teachers as a team and ensures they receive support and the resources they request. The budget is adequate for resources and artefacts. Outcomes in RE are at least as good as those in the core subjects. The RE co-ordinator observes lessons and helps to share the good practice she sees. Reflection time is part of lessons in RE to help pupils consider their learning and build on it. Three lessons were observed during the inspection, all of which demonstrated a very imaginative approach to the subject. Teachers in all three lessons engaged the children with good questioning and activity. All the lesson plans were well presented and reflected good planning. The Nursery group were told the story of Easter by their teachers who used puppet figures to represent the main characters. This was highly effective with children so young who responded enthusiastically and showed good understanding. A year 4 lesson based around belief had a local clergyman involved and the pupils asked excellent questions and received answers which supported their learning. There was time to reflect and very clear support for spiritual development. The year 5 lesson

focused initially on the concept of pilgrimage and then concentrated on the stations of the cross through the use of copies of works of art to which the children made excellent responses about the feelings which they thought were depicted in the pictures showing the suffering of Jesus.

Each week at lunch time people from the local churches help to run the Bible Adventure Club. This was well attended and engaged children in activities related to their learning in RE.

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

The school receives excellent leadership from a head teacher, who is dedicated to its success, and from a very supportive governing body whose members express a great awareness of the school's Christian foundation and who actively promote its Christian ethos. Governors' meetings always include prayer and as individuals they are actively involved in monitoring and evaluating all aspects of school life including collective worship, which they attend regularly, and RE.

Members of staff feel valued and enjoy coming to work where they feel supported by leadership and governance. Staff development is given high importance, as is staff well – being, and all staff spoken to confirm strong support for the school's Church affiliation. Staff opinion is sought regularly as is the reaction of parents to school procedures and practice. Parents spoke of choosing the school for their children and how they value its Christian ethos which they see as being at the heart of the good behaviour and the care and opportunities offered to their children. Parents valued the 'open door' policy of the Head and how staff dealt sensitively and appropriately with any issues. Governors and parents interact positively as seen in a recent focus group for parents set up by the chair of governors to gain parent opinion. Governors also work with the school council.

The school's relationship with the church is described as vibrant, with regular involvement from the incumbent and assistant priest, and strong support from the foundation governors. The head teacher also ensures good relations with the local community and other local schools, including the church secondary school which works with its feeder schools to ensure good transition.

SIAS report [March 2009] [Harleston CofE VA Primary School]