

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Rothersthorpe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Street
Rothersthorpe
NN7 3HS

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Northamptonshire
Dates of inspection: 18.05.09
Date of last inspection: 19.06.06
School's unique reference number: 122014
Headteacher: Jane Battams
Inspector's name and number: Anne Spence 315

School context

This is a rural primary school with 91 on roll. 40% of the children are from Rothersthorpe and the remaining 60% are from a nearby estate in Northampton. Most pupils are White British and only a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. At least 25% of the pupils are on the special needs register. The head teacher has been in post for 8 years and has 0.5 teaching commitment.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rothersthorpe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are satisfactory.

The school has a pervading Christian, family atmosphere where the children show respect and care and concern for each other. There are close links with the church and local community which are enhanced by the shared usage of the school hall as a village hall. Collective worship and religious education (RE) support the spiritual development of the children and their understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Established strengths

- Very strong links with the church and local community.
- A Christian ethos which is evident in the relationships within and outside the school.
- Supportive parents and governors.

Focus for development

- Complete a self evaluation that clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the school and focuses on impact rather than provision.
- Give opportunities for the whole school community to evaluate the effectiveness of the distinctive Christian and Church of England tradition of the school
- Ensure that the areas identified for development are included in the school development plan and regularly evaluated to assess progress towards implementation.
- Ensure that governors develop their "critical friend" responsibility, so that they can contribute to the school's development as a church school through challenge as well as support.

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

The school has a sound Christian ethos which is evident in the relationships between the whole school community. Through the 'buddy' system the older pupils take care of the younger children; these friendships are long lasting and create an atmosphere of respect and concern. The school maintains an interest in pupils after they have left and year 7 and year 11 pupils are invited to return to school for a social occasion, they are also allowed to use the school field after school hours. The school has strong links with the community and at Harvest the children deliver parcels to the elderly residents; the parents feel that this makes the children more considerate and aware that the village is made up of different types of people, it builds an appreciation of other people and a respect for the community; it also gives

an opportunity for children with no grand parents to have contact with older people. Non village parents consider that the children take this understanding to where they live. The head teacher feels that the school benefits from sharing the use of the hall and this ensures that the school is at the heart of the community. The head teacher is on the village hall committee and through this she maintains a close contact with many of the village organisations. The links with the local church are also strong, and it is used both for collective worship and as a resource for RE. The reception children are given an awareness raising session when they start school and visit both the inside and outside of the church, this ensures that the children feel comfortable in the building and appreciate its beauty and uniqueness. During their time in school the children also visit other church buildings, this enables them to appreciate the differences in provision and visits from representatives of different faiths also enhance their understanding. The children consider that learning about other faiths ensures that they don't hurt people's feelings. Every effort is made to give the children first hand experiences, the school plans to link with a school in area of Northampton where there is a diverse population and the children will have the opportunity of mixing with people from other faiths. The school also has a link with a school in Uganda and this is maintained through a foundation governor who regularly visits the school; from this link the children have gained an understanding of another culture. The understanding of the Anglican tradition is also enhanced by teaching in RE. The pupils learn about signs and symbols and also take part in acting out a christening service. This enhances their understanding of the Anglican faith and Year 5 and 6 pupils identified christening as an initiation into Christianity. A role play wedding was held in a non conformist church thus enabling the children to appreciate differences and similarities in ceremonies. The children are encouraged to take on values and beliefs that are meaningful to them and to appreciate the wonder of the world around them; this makes a valid contribution to their spiritual development. The parents also said that the children are aware that God is all around us and that they have an appreciation that he takes care of us affecting how we behave. The children's progress in RE is clearly monitored through assessments at the end of each unit of work, this ensures that standards in RE are in line with other subjects, particularly with humanities. Displays and symbols around the school confirm its Christian ethos; they also enhance the children's understanding of other religions and cultures and the school brochure and other documents contain evidence of the Christian ethos of the school, these were areas identified for development in the previous section 48 inspection; however the school logo does not clearly state that the school is a Church of England school and the school notice board has not been replaced following a minor building programme in June 2008. The parents feel that the school is friendly open and welcoming and that the children are safe and secure. They also commented that the school has strong leaders, everyone is very approachable and all children are known individually; the children feel they can go to anyone for help and that the teachers will always listen. The children commented that 'everyone is involved with everything; no-one is left out,' and that the teachers help you to be involved. Prayer is important in the life of the school; the children understand that when we pray we are talking to God and we can ask for forgiveness, help or say thank you. The children think about their behaviour and consider what they could do differently and how other people feel. At playtimes the children are well behaved and Christian in attitude. There is a consensus of opinion that the school is a happy school where the children are encouraged to care and respect one another.

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

Collective worship (assembly) is held at the end of the school day. The act of worship observed focused on the Ascension and was taken by the RE coordinator. The story used was relevant for all ages and the children responded well identifying times when they had said goodbye to someone but knowing that they would see them again. There was a period of reflection and the children were asked to consider how they would feel and also how the disciples felt when Jesus left them. A candle was not lit during this assembly but it is sometimes used as a focus point for reflection or prayer. The children understand that the candle represents Jesus, the light of the world and that it helps them to pray and think about the story and what it means to them. The Lord's prayer is said on a regular basis. The older children efficiently carried out routine tasks during the assembly and an atmosphere of calm was evident throughout. The children sang enthusiastically. The children are involved in worship in many ways; they take part in improvised dramas, repeat phrases in stories and write prayers for church services. The themes used for collective worship focus on the teachings of Jesus, events in the Christian calendar and moral codes. Plans are prepared by all members of staff who lead worship and these confirm the Christian teaching and moral

codes that are contained in the themes used. The parents, children and head teacher confirmed that the themes impact on the way the children behave and treat each other and enhances their understanding of the Christian ethos and Anglican foundation of the school. All the staff lead assembly and the local rector and a Methodist lay preacher lead worship fortnightly; the children commented that they enjoy it when Rev Stephen and John take worship and that they focus on stories about Jesus. They recognised that Rev Stephen belongs to the local parish church. The regular monitoring and evaluating of collective worship was an area identified for development in the last section 48 inspection; the impact of collective worship is monitored informally and the head teacher feels that in a small school she is able to assess its impact by the way the children behave, how the parents react and in general conversations with and between children. Rev Stephen, who is a foundation governor, is able to monitor assemblies especially when they are held in church. He considers that assemblies are of a good standard. The Bishop's visitor sometimes observes an assembly and makes comments in his written report. Key stage assemblies are held once a week and this enables a more age based approach and a celebration and sharing assembly is held on a Friday. The local church is used for worship for festival services, parents are invited to attend and members of the community attend the Christmas celebration which is followed by refreshments in the school / village hall, this emphasises the school's position at the heart of the community and the parents feel that the children are enabled to develop a physical bond with the church through these services

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

The school has a strong Christian commitment and the head teacher has a vision to maintain a happy and caring family atmosphere with a Christian ethos. She considers that the school gives Christian support, care and comfort to all members of the school community and that this care extends beyond the time in school. Comments from the parents and children confirm that the school is welcoming and that all children are treated as individuals. There is always someone the children can go to for help and that the teachers will always listen. The children are caring of each other and are able to empathise with the needs of others. The parents are very supportive and there are many opportunities for them to contact the school through class surgeries, workshop evenings, shared reading and questionnaires. The questionnaires focus on social and wellbeing issues but to date there is no evidence of the monitoring of the effectiveness of the school as a church school. There is evidence of monitoring of RE by the children and the results show a clear understanding of the areas taught in all year groups. The governors are very supportive and visit the school on a regular basis. The governors' curriculum committee has a monitoring role and this includes RE and collective worship, but there is no formal monitoring of the effectiveness of the school as a church school, although this was an area for development identified in the last section 48 inspection. The head teacher feels that she has a strong team of teachers and has utmost trust in them; evidence is gathered from what is in the classrooms, how children behave and how parents react. There is a school council and the children feel they are able to resolve issues and problems and the minutes show that the classes individually put forward recommendations and that these are discussed in a fair and open manner. Completion of a toolkit that clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses and focuses on impact rather than provision would further enhance the Christian tradition and Anglican foundation of the school.

SIAS report May 2009 Rothersthorpe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Church Street, Rothersthorpe, NN7 3HS