

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Oakington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Water Lane
Oakington
Cambridgeshire
CB4 5AL

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire
Dates of inspection: June 29th 2010
Date of last inspection: May 2007
School's unique reference number: 110833
Headteacher: Mrs Sally Daggianti
Inspector's name and number: Ann Williams 573

School context

This small school serves the village of Oakington to the north west of Cambridge. Most pupils live locally, but some travel from out of catchment because of the school's good reputation. The headteacher has been in post since the beginning of the school year. The village playgroup is adjacent to the school and the local Anglican church is within walking distance. There are also Baptist and Methodist churches in the village.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Oakington Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Christian values are at the heart of this school. The church foundation is prominent, with thoughtful and colourful displays in corridors and classrooms. Strong Christian leadership and positive relationships between all members of the community ensure a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere where every pupil thrives. Outstanding behaviour promotes a calm learning environment dedicated to educating the whole child.

Established strengths

- Overt Christian leadership which emphasises the importance of Christian values and the church foundation on which the school is based.
- Open and caring relationships between all members of the school community.
- Confident and articulate pupils whose behaviour is exemplary.

Focus for development

- To introduce the 'Values for Life' scheme for collective worship.
- To involve pupils more regularly in the planning and leading of worship.
- To give further opportunities for older pupils to discuss issues of spirituality.

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

Christian ethos underpins the life of this school and is evident in the thought-provoking displays throughout the school and in the respect shown by and to every member of the community. All pupils are valued as God's children, and they are nurtured and challenged to become confident young people. Support is given where needed, and every child, including any with severe difficulties, is managed and learns effectively within the classroom environment. Behaviour is outstanding, and, by knowing each pupil individually, staff are able to differentiate tasks accordingly.

Pupils take on responsibilities as school councillors and as friendship monitors, and keenly try to win points for their house.

Achievements are celebrated weekly, with praise given for living by Christian values alongside academic and other successes. Photographs of 'stars of the week', displayed in the corridor, are proudly pointed out.

Pupils are equally proud of the area for quiet reflection, where they are free to sit and to write prayers, or to read from the book of prayers written by their peers.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities, appealing to all interests and abilities includes sewing, Latin and tag rugby. Most activities incur no cost, but governors ensure that no pupil is excluded because of financial constraints, and they similarly make funding available for residential visits should the need arise.

Through charity fundraising, pupils care for those less fortunate both locally and globally. There are close ties with two schools in Kenya, and visitors from there have helped to make the support more meaningful.

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

Collective worship is central to the school day. Themes are planned around the Anglican church calendar and steps are being taken to introduce the 'Values for Life' scheme.

Pupils experience a variety of styles with worship led regularly by the local vicar and by members of local churches and Christian groups. Singing, often enhanced by the choir, is enthusiastic, and all join in with pupil-led responses. The children are eager to take part as musicians, in drama or to read a prayer. The visual focus includes a 'thinking candle', lit before prayers and at other times when there are special prayer requests.

Pupils remember the Christian message and are able to apply it to their lives. They understand the significance of prayer and value being able to write their own, for reading during worship and to add to the prayer tree in the quiet area, used for personal reflection.

Pupils have planned and led specific acts of worship and increasing this involvement is a focus for development. All children appreciate Key Stage worship when content is tailored to their level of understanding. Older pupils value time for discussion of spiritual issues and to introduce further opportunities is also highlighted for development.

Worship is further enhanced by Cathedral days, and by celebrations in the local church for festivals and the annual leavers' service, attended by parents and members of the community. Each year, after the week-long Bible Club, the local incumbent holds a Sunday service in the school instead of in church encouraging families to worship. Pupils are also invited to participate in all age Sunday services, often attending with the headteacher.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding.

Religious education (RE) is delivered according to the Cambridgeshire agreed syllabus. Planning is carefully and thoroughly undertaken, with lessons incorporating a variety of differentiated tasks to ensure success for all pupils. Advantage is taken of training and resources available from the diocese, so that lessons are of the highest quality.

In the lessons observed, Year Two pupils showed clear understanding of symbols and plants associated with the Virgin Mary, and competently made their own versions of a Mary garden. Key Stage Two pupils were thoughtful and mature in their discussions about Buddhism, and the value of meditation in peaceful and tranquil surroundings, which they understood well and were able to apply similar principles to the Christian faith.

Throughout the year, effort is made to enhance the teaching of RE with visits from local Christians to be interviewed about their faith, and from visitors of other world religions to give personal insight into their beliefs and traditions.

RE is assessed regularly, and pupil progress recorded and reported to parents in the same way as all other subjects. Pupils' achievement in RE is at least in line with other areas of the curriculum, and they are made aware of their progress and how to improve.

Pupils speak of their enjoyment of RE and proudly point to the work produced during the year, displayed throughout the school, in corridors and classrooms. A notice board in the

church is also devoted to displays of the children's work in RE.

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

The headteacher is an overt Christian leader, much valued for her Christian commitment and vision for the school. Appointed at the beginning of the present school year, she has built positive relationships with all members of the school community. Staff work together as a mutually supportive team, confident that their efforts are appreciated. Together with the governing body, the headteacher has put measures in place to ensure a good work/life balance for staff, their wellbeing having priority for management.

Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities to challenge and to monitor and evaluate collective worship and RE. They strive to be fully involved in the Christian life of the school, and join together with staff and pupils in school activities. Many are members of local churches.

Parents speak highly of the Christian ethos experienced by their children and the way it permeates their whole life. They welcome the opportunity to voice their opinions at the Parents' Forum, introduced by the present headteacher, and support the school through an active Parent Staff Association (PSA), raising money for a variety of causes.

The school is at the heart of the local community. It is central to village life as well as being part of the church family. Staff, pupils and parents assist at village events, the PSA helping to organise the village firework display, for example, and school events are advertised and reported on the village website.

SIAS report June 2010 Oakington VA Primary School, Oakington, Cambs CB4 5AL