



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Buckden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane,
Buckden,
St. Neots
PE19 5TT

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire
Dates of inspection: 17th September 2009
Date of last inspection: March 2006
School's unique reference number: 110810
Headteacher: Mr. Andrew Clarke
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Kathryn Wright 436

School context

The school serves the village of Buckden and the surrounding area. Most children are white British, and the proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The headteacher has been in post for about 18 months. The local vicar has recently been joined by a new curate. The school is a short walk from the parish church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Buckden Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The Christian vision of the headteacher and foundation governors lies at the heart of the school. The spiritual welfare of the children has a high priority, and is evident throughout the curriculum and in collective worship. The school's self evaluation is of a high quality and provides a very accurate picture of the school as a church school.

Established strengths

- The spiritual leadership of the headteacher and foundation governors
- The outstanding partnership between the church community and school
- The provision for spiritual development
- The high profile of collective worship within the school

Focus for development

- To formalise the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and Christian distinctiveness of the school by the foundation governors
- To provide opportunities for children to lead worship
- To embed the changes made to collective worship on Mondays and Fridays throughout the whole week

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

Children describe the school as a friendly and helpful place where they love learning. Most children understand what it means for the school to be a church school, and are able to talk about the meaning of the cross on their school badge. One child said that 'it reminds us of Jesus when we are in school'. Christian values are demonstrated through the children's relationships with one another, and in their understanding of each others needs. The importance of the pupil voice is demonstrated through a very active school council, who have made significant contributions to school improvement. The policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been reviewed recently. This has raised the profile of this aspect of provision, and all curriculum subjects plan opportunities for development. The provision for spiritual development is outstanding, although it is not currently monitored or evaluated. Religious education (RE) makes an important contribution to children's understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. In addition, specific RE days are held to make links with Ely Cathedral and the parish church. Displays around the school remind children of the importance of prayer and valuing others' achievements. Provision for cultural development is limited at the current time; however the school has strategies in place to address this. Children understand well their role in the community providing events for different groups, including the elderly, and organising fundraising for charity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

A recent review of collective worship has placed it at the heart of the life of the school. Collective worship is exceptionally well planned and recorded. A new policy has ensured that the use of liturgy, including greetings and blessings, is now a regular part of worship. Children understand the special nature of this time of day by bringing crosses that they have made to the focal area at the beginning of the week. Children are aware of different types of prayer, including the Lord's prayer. In the acts of worship observed, good use was made of visual aids and children's responses. Opportunity was provided for reflection and the atmosphere created encouraged a sense of the sacred. Many children value these times saying they feel calm and think about how to behave. Parents spoke of children regularly talking about bible stories at home, and singing Christian songs they had learned. Children regularly visit the church, especially at important times in the church year. The majority of the children talk positively about worship, particularly in relation to singing. However, there were a significant minority in Key Stage One who did not share these views especially in relation to mid week acts of worship. At the current time there are few opportunities for children to lead worship. The collective worship co-ordinator provides excellent leadership, and works closely in partnership with the vicar and headteacher.

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

The spiritual leadership of the headteacher and foundation governors is a strength of this school. The importance of the 'faith dimension' and raising awareness of this is seen by the foundation governors as the most important part of their role. This was exemplified through school policies and the recent changes to collective worship. The school brochure emphasises the importance of the Christian ethos and the value placed on the 'whole child'. The partnership between the church and school creates a sense of community and belonging which parents value highly. The vicar supports the school through regular visits and through pastoral care. All staff understand what it means to be part of a church school setting and have valued the changes made by the leadership team. The impact of this is seen in the positive relationships and sense of well being among staff. Staff and foundation governors regularly attend training and support provided by the Diocese, and evidence of Diocesan links were evident in displays around the school. Whilst the school has made significant progress in areas identified in the last inspection, the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and church school distinctiveness and effectiveness are still in their infancy. The school is beginning to develop strategies for ensuring that church school issues are at the heart of the schools self evaluation process.