



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Guilden Morden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Pound Green
Guilden Morden
Royston
Hertfordshire SG8 0JZ

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridge
Date of inspection: 14 September 2009
Date of last inspection: 19 October 2006
School's unique reference number: 110790
Headteacher: Mrs Judy Major
Inspector's name and number: John Rudge

School context

Children from families living in Guilden Morden and surrounding villages attend this smaller than average primary school, which has close links with the parish church and with other Christian groups in the area. More children than usual have learning difficulties and some of these have statements of particular educational needs. The school intake varies considerably from year to year. A new headteacher has been in post for just over a year.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Guilden Morden VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good

The school is making good progress in addressing the issues of how to balance its local context as a school serving the local community, with its mission to provide a distinctive and inclusive Christian setting for all children who attend. It achieves this balance by welcoming children of all backgrounds into a secure and caring learning environment, and offering them opportunities to take part in Christian worship and to learn in an atmosphere where Christian values are upheld and celebrated.

Established Strengths

- The ongoing efforts to maintain a balance between the school's Church foundation and its role as a school for all children in the local community.
- The central role of collective worship as a focus for the daily spiritual life of the school.
- The effective leadership, in terms of the school's Church foundation, given by the headteacher and a foundation governor.

Focus for development

- Extending the children's awareness and appreciation of cultures different from their own.
- Involving the children more in planning, presenting and evaluating collective worship.
- Encouraging the whole governing body to participate effectively in developing the school's mission and ethos.

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

Children learn well in a secure, caring environment and staff are committed to their development and welfare. This is particularly the case for those with learning difficulties who receive good individual support and encouragement, reflecting the school's commitment to ensuring that all children achieve their potential. This is seen as part of the Christian setting which forms the basis for the school's mission statement. Children are aware of and understand the importance of this ethos, and are encouraged to feel part of it, for example by producing their own version of the school's mission statement. The effective interaction between the parish church and the school is a natural and recognised part of school life. It helps to support the Christian ethos and Anglican foundation of the school. It also offers opportunities for children to share in important occasions in the life of the church, through acts of worship. This interaction is further extended through a range of different Christian groups and individuals who contribute to the worshipping life of the school. A limited number of key Christian values are both stated and exemplified around the school, in displays, for instance, and in the school's behaviour policy. In introducing the SEAL programme, the school has been careful to find ways of exemplifying the underlying values through Christian teachings from Biblical and other sources. The school's programme of RE contributes to children's awareness of important spiritual and moral issues. However, the school as a whole should use a wider range of opportunities to extend the children's awareness of cultural and religious diversity.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship provides a focal point for the school's daily life and ethos. All members of staff share in leading collective worship. Children are aware of its role in setting the tone of the school day and welcome the opportunities for quiet reflection, singing and celebration. Staff and children recognise the importance of celebrating the achievements of those children who have contributed to the quality of life in the school, for example, through acts of kindness towards others or through showing courage in overcoming difficulties in their own lives. This is one of the ways in which collective worship helps to reinforce connections between the life of the school and Christian teaching and values as seen, for example, on the day of the visit, when the theme 'why I am special' was linked with the school's code of conduct. Collective worship on this occasion began in a quiet and reverent atmosphere with appropriate music and the lighting of a candle. The hall incorporates Christian symbols and displays of children's work illustrating Christian themes and stories. Suitable prayers, including the school's own prayer, singing, story telling and a time for quiet reflection all contributed to the occasion. Children helped with the arrangements for collective worship. There remains further scope for them to be more involved in the planning, presentation and evaluation of worship.

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

The new headteacher has brought both vision and direction to developing and setting the tone of the school's spiritual life. One important feature of this is the wider sharing of the school's ethos among teaching staff and the encouragement given to children to own and value the school's Christian foundation. One of the school's foundation governors plays a pivotal role in the organisation, presentation and evaluation of collective worship. She provides a very effective link with the headteacher, staff and children and with the parish church and other Christian groups and individuals who regularly share in collective worship. Parents are also encouraged to take an active role in supporting the spiritual life of the school and they do so, for example, when the children are involved on special occasions in the parish church. Parents generally welcome the school's church foundation; one parent, for example, affirmed that it had a positive influence on their child's development. The governing body as a whole should be encouraged to take a more regular and active role in developing the school's ethos. For example, the school's self evaluation form for church inspections could be used more effectively as a working and developmental tool in shaping the spiritual life of the school.