



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St. Philip's, Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

2 Vinery Way, Cambridge. CB1 3DR

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 18 & 19 October 2010

Date of last inspection: 20 & 21 February 2008

School's unique reference number: 110840

Headteacher: Mrs Siobhan Rouse

Inspector's name and number: Mr Stephen Cutts 495

School context

St Philip's is a large primary school and pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic background. The number of children with disabilities and special needs is above average. The school is some distance from St Philip's Church. Years Five and Six have recently moved into a new modern extension. The school has Healthy School Status, the Basic Skills Award and the International Schools Award.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Philip's as a Church of England school are good

The Christian principles of this school nourish a caring, inclusive and happy environment where all members are valued and individual needs and strengths are recognised and addressed. There is strong leadership from governors and head teacher. Relationships are positive and pupils respond with good behaviour. There are good links with local churches and the vicar plays an active role in the life of the school and its wider community.

Established strengths

- The school's self evaluation by senior management and governors is thorough, sound, and provides a good tool for development and assessment.
- Planning and recording of both collective worship and religious education is detailed and clear.
- Children value the church school ethos and behave well by respecting and looking after each other.
- Excellent provision is made for pupils from a diverse cultural background, and there is a happy family atmosphere shared by all the school community.
- Diversity is celebrated and invaluable support is given by members of staff from cultural minorities.

Focus for development

- Introduce a regular evaluation and monitoring plan for Religious Education lessons.
- Give more time for reflection in acts of worship, using the candle and cross as a focus, and give children more involvement with planning, delivery and evaluation.

- Make the school more overtly Christian with new signage, banners and a central religious display.
- Include a short slot in all governors' meetings to discuss developments and analyse progress in RE, collective worship and other church related links.

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

This school is happy, welcoming and buzzing with enthusiasm. There is a real sense of belonging to a special "family", as children understand the importance of Christian values, respecting, looking after and caring for each other. Their responsibilities are far-reaching, using buddy systems and monitor roles. Charity work is evident and international links are well established. Good work is positively rewarded and celebrated. A wide range of extra-curricular activities develop individual talents and skills. Community links are good. Teachers know and understand the children, enabling them to cater for individual needs and make excellent provision for all pupils. The school provides a listening ear for parents, and, in close partnership with outside agencies, gives support. Everyone's voice is heard. The school council were able to give examples of how ideas had been taken on board. Bi-lingual members of staff contribute good links with the local Bengali and Islam communities and are used well by the school in planning the curriculum and communication. Prayer plays an important part in the life of the school. A parents' Christian Group meets each week to which everyone is invited. Church Schools of Cambridge Trust plays a key role in the Christian life of the school by organising, supporting and financing Christian projects. The most recent of these looked at spirituality through the arts, led by one of the school's teaching assistants. In a recent survey nearly all parents said their children enjoy coming to school and thought the school met all children's needs.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Worship is important in the life of this school, and the head teacher can clearly articulate the qualities of good collective worship. A diverse approach offers a variety of experiences for children. Hymn, prayer and talk are present each time. There was a table with cloth, cross and candle, but these were not used effectively to focus children's attention and there was little time for quiet reflection. Both acts of worship observed were lively presentations with good questioning throughout, and children listened and responded well, with a few exceptions in the youngest groups. Worship uses artefacts, power-point, readings and occasionally drama to interest the children. Children would like more participation in leading the acts of worship and in writing prayers. They enjoyed the singing but would like to include new songs and stories. Both acts of worship began with "fun" activities that captured the children's attention and finished with links to Bible passages and Christian teaching so that all children had a clear message to take away. Many visitors play an active role and the vicar leads worship weekly. Worship planning is a particular strength of the school and it is well documented. Planning sheets have space to record the leader's evaluation. Foundation governors attend at least once a term and there is feedback to the governing body. Special events such as the leavers' service and Christmas carol service are held in the church. Children see the acts of worship as being an important way to learn about God and how they should behave, and discussions revealed a few examples of how children talk about worship at home.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Lessons observed were good and involved enthusiastic and lively participation from the children. A variety of teaching methods included paired, individual and group work. Lessons had clear cross-curricular links, one with literacy and one with art. All children were thinking, and relating what they learnt to their own situation. Pupils from other faiths are used very well as shown in a Key Stage Two lesson where Muslim children were keen to share knowledge of symbols and patterns from their faith, leading discussions and translating many of the designs. Key Stage One children explored the meaning of faith and worship and their ideas were impressive, showing a clear understanding of belief and the ways in which people worship. They spoke of why some go to church for baptism, marriage, prayers, hymns and

praise. Visual aids, power point presentation and big books engaged and held children's attention. All children's answers were valued and discussed with references and comparisons to other faiths throughout both lessons. Children's books show clearly how they learn from religion as well as about religion, exploring the messages in Bible stories and emotions evoked by worship and faith. Both the new coordinator and RE governor have received training. The skills list is well thought out and is a useful tool for planning and evaluation. Visits to a variety of places of worship and carefully chosen visitors to school enrich the children's learning. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons is in early stages of development but there are plans to address this issue soon. Children were enthusiastic and all said they enjoyed RE lessons.

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

Members of the leadership team and governors share a vision, rooted in Christian values, that influences life and behaviour in school. Governors are becoming more active, supportive and challenging. They seek views and ideas from staff and have made significant steps to ensure their life-work balance and well-being. They are involved in self evaluation, policy reviews, parental questionnaires and revision of the school brochure. Christian distinctiveness does not feature regularly in governors' meetings. The head teacher provides effective leadership which contributes significantly to the ethos of the school. A very good level of pastoral care and support means that every child feels valued. Members of the school council expressed pride in belonging to such an inclusive school. Staff know and understand the needs of children in their care. Parents are well informed and made to feel welcome. When surveyed, the majority felt that the senior management team listens to, and responds to, their views. There is clear communication of aims and ethos to the parents and community through personal contact, and through the school brochure and website. Appointments and induction of new members of staff are influenced by the foundation of the school, ensuring that there is at least sympathy towards the school's Christian ethos and aims. Parent surveys reveal that the school's public image has greatly improved in recent years and it has become more popular. Community links are good. There are strong links with local churches through the incumbent and some members of the church council. They enjoy mutual support, advertising events, sharing facilities and working together. Some special church services are held in the school.

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