



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Hopton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Thelnetham Road
Hopton
Diss
Norfolk
IP22 2QY

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Date of inspection: 9 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 18 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 124703

Headteacher: Marc Careless

Inspector's name and number: David Bunkell 815

School context

Since the previous inspection, as a result of the Local Authority's reorganisation of schools, pupils now stay for two further years, leaving aged 11 rather than aged 9. Currently 91 pupils attend the school, and pupil numbers have almost doubled in three years. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hopton Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Pupils benefit from highly effective links with the nearby parish church and other local church communities.
- The mature, caring outlook of the pupils is clearly rooted in Christian values.
- A highly developed interpretation of spirituality is shared across the whole school community.
- The priority given to the leadership of collective worship (CW) and religious education (RE) plays a substantial role in defining the Christian character of the school.

Areas to improve

- Seek further opportunities to encourage individual prayer, to benefit pupils' personal spiritual journeys.
- Without reducing the Christian prominence of CW, make more use of the Old Testament to enhance pupils' overall biblical understanding.
- Extend actions that demonstrate the Christian character of the school to the wider local community, so that the lives of pupils are further enriched by the evident Christian ethos of the school.

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

Christian values of caring and tolerance are always highly apparent, and are implanted deeply in all areas of daily life in the school, having a major impact on the management of behaviour and in the service of others. Regardless of ability or background, all pupils are enabled to maximise their progress, and to achieve high levels of attainment. Spirituality is well developed throughout the school, with pupils going out of their way to care for each other, and to show understanding of the differing needs of others. Pupils who had joined the school quite recently said how quickly they had been made to feel welcome, and had rapidly made friends. Pupils show high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, and are happy to express their own opinions. Christian values contribute greatly to their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. This also enables the exceptional relationships within the school, with adults as excellent role models, and mutual respect at the centre of all interactions. Pupils' behaviour is of the highest standard, and pupils are able to apologise and forgive on the rare occasions when lapses occur. The pupils are very much aware that Christianity is a world faith, and practical support of Christians in Kenya has helped reinforce this. In CW, pupils enthusiastically and thoughtfully sang a South African version of the Lord's Prayer. Pupils benefit greatly from the strong links that the school has with the Hopton High Street Chapel and understand the variety of traditions in local Christian worship. Prayers for the school had been said in the church and the chapel on the Sunday before the inspection, and on the actual morning. Pupils learn about other world faiths in RE lessons, and appreciate the need for religious tolerance and for an understanding of other beliefs. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons, finding them interesting and challenging. They particularly benefit from the holistic, cross-curricular nature of much of their learning in RE.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils value the opportunity to meet together daily for collective worship (CW). It is now scheduled in the middle of each morning, as pupils had felt that previously it was rushed and said that they would like more time allocated to it. It is equally valued by the adults in the school community, who were seen to join with small groups of pupils in a discussion about when it is necessary to forgive. CW is distinctly Christian, following the current theme, which is always a Christian value. Biblical material is used regularly as part of CW, but this rarely includes the Old Testament. Consequently, pupils' knowledge of that part of the Bible is less developed. One pupil perceptively described the Bible as 'an autobiography of Jesus'. CW begins with prayer as a candle is lit by a pupil. The colour of the candle and the cloth on which it is placed follow the liturgical colours of the Anglican church, and pupils could recall correctly the colours used at other times of the church year and for festivals. Pupils join in communal prayers, and individual pupils volunteer to say improvised prayers at the end of CW as a summary. Prayers are also said before lunch. Pupils are encouraged to say silent prayers at the worship table in the hall or in the dedicated outdoor reflection areas, but the use of personal prayer is not as well established as that of formal prayers, said aloud by all. A wide range of worship songs and hymns help to reinforce the Christian basis of CW and its positive impact on maintaining the school's Christian ethos, and pupils could link this with their own excellent behaviour and tolerance of others. Pupils could explain the significance of the Holy Spirit at recent Pentecost services, and the basis of the Holy Trinity. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to contribute to the planning of CW, and to help lead sessions. In addition to a range of staff, CW is led fortnightly by an 'Open the Book' team from three local Christian communities, and the pupils said how much benefit they derive from these sessions. The rector often leads CW, as does another foundation governor, who is an elder from the High Street Chapel, providing an approach from an alternative Christian tradition. Foundation governors also help to monitor and evaluate CW, as well as assisting in the planning process.

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

An unequivocal Christian vision underpins all that leaders do, and this permeates all areas of school life, as seen in the resultant calm, purposeful atmosphere, and warm welcome given to all visitors. This has a direct influence on the achievements of the pupils, with standards of attainment in line with or above national expectations. Meeting the needs of all pupils is at the heart of this. The well-being of all is of the utmost importance. Self-evaluation is insightful and honest, showing that leaders have no room for complacency, constantly striving to do even better. All groups within the school contribute to the process of evaluation. Each year pupils complete a survey on CW, with results over time showing a marked rise in levels of appreciation and benefit, for example strongly agreeing that CW is a special time shared by all. Specific year groups participate in occasional surveys of perceptions of RE, again showing mature mindfulness. Parental views are sought in surveys, showing very high levels of appreciation, and at parent forum meetings. At a recent forum meeting the school's church school status was discussed, and parents had felt that the Christian ethos was very strong, but not overbearing, with children encouraged to make up their own minds. Parental responses to Ofsted Parent View are also highly supportive of all that the school does. The minutes of governing body meetings show the passion that governors have for the school, and they proficiently carry out their strategic responsibilities. The whole curriculum is linked to the school's Christian vision, and in many cases RE is taught through a mixture of other subject areas, such as drama, music, dance, ICT and art. Senior staff and governors are fully committed to planning for the future of church schools, and of the mutual benefits of partnerships with other local schools. The school is at the geographical centre of the village, but exterior signage and some website content does not always make overt reference to the fact this is a church school. Leadership of RE and CW is exceptional, as recognised by diocesan officials. The subject leader has spoken at conferences, and new units of work for the diocese are trialled first at this school. All this plays an essential part of enabling pupils to gain maximum enjoyment and benefit from these areas. The arrangements for RE and CW go far beyond basic statutory requirements. Pupils also participate in diocesan events, and spoke enthusiastically about a recent 'To be a Pilgrim Day' at the cathedral.

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