



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Hadleigh St Marys Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Stonehouse Road, Hadleigh,
Ipswich IP7 5BH

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Date of inspection: 16 March 2009

Date of last inspection: March 2006

School's unique reference number: 124760

Headteacher: Alison Herbert

Inspector's name and number: Simon Windmill 182

School context

Hadleigh St Marys is a smaller than average primary school serving a residential area in the town of Hadleigh. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds, and the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The school runs a breakfast club each morning, and there is a playgroup on site. The school achieved Healthy Schools status in 2007.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hadleigh St Marys as a Church of England school are good

The school is soundly based on Christian values. Its Christian ethos is apparent in all aspects of its life and work, making a great contribution to the school's happy and caring atmosphere. Under the leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors work very well as a mutually supportive team.

Established strengths

- The school's Christian values, which underpin the life of the school
- The high quality of collective worship
- The high standard of pupils' behaviour
- The caring relationships between staff, governors and pupils

Focus for development

- Correct the misperception some parents have about standards of behaviour
- Develop the planning of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Increase governors' involvement in promoting the school's status as church school
- Develop the recently introduced Reflective Storytelling to enhance religious education

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

The headteacher, staff and governors see the school's Christian ethos as a vital part of school life. Care and support for pupils and staff are very good, and reflect the Christian values on which the school is based. Staff, parents and governors sustain a warm, welcoming, inclusive and friendly atmosphere, in which pupils feel valued and safe.

Pupils' behaviour is very good, reflecting the school's Christian values. Pupils understand, respect and obey the school rules, and value the fact that they have a say in what the rules should be. During the inspection, there was no evidence of misbehaviour, and the Ofsted inspection confirmed this. However some parents think that behaviour is not as good as it should be, and the school is working hard to correct this misperception, and has set up a Parents' Focus group to address this.

Pupils get on very well with each other, and with the staff, who provide good role models. These relationships greatly help pupils develop self-confidence and independence. They like coming to school – one pupil said, 'It's just great here!'

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, but the school has identified a need to plan opportunities for pupils' spiritual growth. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They value the opportunities provided for quiet reflection, both in collective worship and at other times.

Pupils' awareness and concern for the needs of others is encouraged, and they willingly help to raise money for a number of charities, such as Children in Need and Action for Children, and the school is developing links with a school in India.

The impact of collective worship is outstanding

The head, staff and pupils see collective worship as a central part of school life. It is soundly based on Christian values, and always includes prayer, singing and teaching. Anglican responses are used in worship. The school's Christian identity is reflected in excellent displays of children's work around the school.

Pupils greatly enjoy worship, and the opportunities they have to take part in it or help to prepare for it. They enjoy a wide range of leaders from within and beyond the school, such as the staff, governors, the Baptist pastor and other visiting leaders. Twice a year each class leads worship, with great enthusiasm. A new vicar will be in post at the end of June 2009. Pupils have a good understanding of the purposes of prayer, like saying thank you or sorry, or asking for help, healing, or forgiveness. They sometimes use their own prayers during worship, and would welcome even more opportunities to contribute to worship. Prayers are said at lunchtime and the end of the day.

A candle provides a visual focus for worship, marking it as a special part of the day. Worship is well planned around themes that reflect Christian values and the main festivals of the Church year, such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest and other celebrations. Many of these services are held in the church.

The school has made good use of the diocesan resources available for worship, including the diocesan advisor. This has helped to widen the types of worship offered, for example by including nursery and reception children in a Eucharistic service for toddlers.

The school effectively records, monitors, and evaluates the impact of worship through pupil surveys, which confirm the high quality and enjoyment levels of the worship provided.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Religious education is seen as a very important area of learning by teachers, parents and pupils. It is well planned to cover Christianity and other faiths, and is based on the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus. Religious education is also used to link with the Anglican traditions promoted in collective worship.

Pupils enjoy religious education, and make good progress in it, comparable to progress across the curriculum. They are able to relate what they learn about Christianity and other faiths to their own lives. Their understanding of different faiths is developed through the stories, rituals and traditions of a range of faiths. They are encouraged to deepen their understanding by asking questions of themselves as well as asking their teachers.

Lessons are planned with clear learning objectives. A wide range of activities is used to stimulate learning, such as drama, discussion, individual and group work. This helps to keep pupils interested in their lessons, and gives them opportunities to work in different ways.

Standards of teaching and learning in religious education are good. For example a lesson on the Torah helped pupils understand the significance and importance of the Torah as a holy book for the Jewish faith, and related this to the importance of the Bible to Christians. Another class enjoyed a session of Reflective Storytelling, which has recently been introduced into the school.

The religious education curriculum is well resourced with suitable artefacts from a range of faiths, and pupils enjoy learning from the artefacts available. Sufficient time is allocated to religious education.

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

The headteacher gives excellent leadership to the school. She is well supported by the recently appointed deputy head, and by all staff and governors. She has a clear vision for the school. Staff and governors all make good contributions to the life of the school, and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. All Governors have identified a need to further develop their roles in church school matters.

The staff feel valued and involved in the school's development. They work very well together as a team, and provide mutual support for each other. This contributes greatly to the happy and supportive atmosphere of the school. Parents also make a significant contribution to the school – for example 15 parents attended the first meeting of a Parents' Focus group to address communication issues.

Strong links with the local church and community support the headteacher and staff in promoting a distinctive Christian vision for the school, with Christian values underpinning its life and work. For example, some pupils contribute to Sunday worship in the church. The school also has good links with local community groups, such as hiring part of the premises to a playgroup, along with other groups such as Weight Watchers and Tai Chi. The school and community maintain good communications via the monthly Community News magazine.

Recommendations from the previous inspection were to develop ways the church could support the school, and to develop differentiation and assessment in religious education. These are now in place.

The school's self-assessment is accurate, and provides a good basis for further developments.