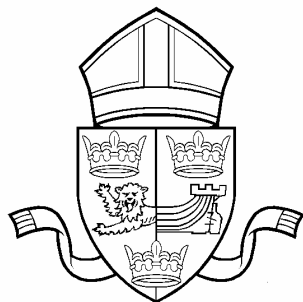


National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report



Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Name and address of school: Barrow Church of England School, Colethorpe Lane, Barrow, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP29 5AU
Type of school : Primary, Age range 4-9
Status: Voluntary Controlled
Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
LA: Suffolk
Dates of inspection: 14/05/2007 and 18/05/2007
Date of last inspection: 9/10/2002 and 11/10/2002
School's Unique reference number: 124690
Name of Headteacher: Mr John Gibson
Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number: Michael Kee 316

School context

Barrow school is a small primary school providing for 4 -9 year old children, mainly from the local area. The village of Barrow is near to Bury St Edmunds and the school intake is from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, mainly of White British origin. Take up of free school meals is significantly below the national average while the percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barrow Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

A strongly caring ethos pervades all aspects of the school's work, the relationships within it and the very evident care for others outside the school. This is very supportive of the children's academic and spiritual development and reflects a very creative and positive approach to leadership and teaching.

Established strengths

- Strong, caring leadership which clearly values the children, staff and parents
- The regular celebration of achievement by children and staff within the highly respectful context of the end of week assembly
- Strong, vibrant relationship with the Church and the incumbent
- A welcoming relationship with parents who clearly value the school and support it actively in many ways, including within the classroom
- Commitment of staff to the school and its church ethos

Focus for development

- The school's Church of England affiliation could be proclaimed more boldly
- More formal recording and reporting of governors' visits will assist monitoring and evaluation and is being pursued

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

The clear recognition of the school's Christian character by leadership, staff and governors, and the ever strengthening relationship with the Church and the incumbent combine to provide a positive, supportive environment where pupils are able to develop both academically and spiritually and enjoy a rich curriculum of opportunities. Relationships within the school are good and are clearly underpinned by Christian values. Pupils consider they are safe at school where teachers look after them and where everyone is kind to each other. They feel able to take their problems to a teacher and among themselves they provide support for each other in the playground. This supportive ethos extends to other activities where pupils help each other on a regular basis in shared reading and also in the school garden where older pupils work alongside younger ones. Pupils say that 'everyone's your buddy'. Members of the school council feel they are listened to and they in turn speak in assembly time to encourage others to contribute to the suggestion box which they set up. Pupils speak of how they enjoy their lessons and a range of sports clubs and music. The school further enriches the learning experience with outside visits which are appreciated by the children.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about going to the village church where they hear stories about Jesus and God and enjoy the Christmas, Easter and Leavers services. They also visit the church for learning activities and are helped by the incumbent to appreciate the building and areas of significance. Pupils are aware of the school's Church of England status and show a very real pride in being a pupil there. Good relationships and pupil pride in their school are supported well by an environment which is vibrant with displays of pupils' work, in corridors and in classrooms, which celebrate learning and achievement and show the caring nature of the school community. This caring for others is epitomised by the school's strong commitment to raising money for a school in Cambodia. Pupils are happy being involved in this fundraising and are devising more ways of doing this. Two children from the school visited the school in Cambodia recently and, together with the member of staff who leads the initiative, spoke about the experience at the recent service in the village church on the occasion of the Archdeacon's visitation. The distinctive Christian character of the school is apparent in all it does and provides, and the Church notice board in the main corridor has an up to date photographic display of Monday Collective Worship and information about church services. All these experiences clearly affirm the Christian ethos of the school and the Anglican tradition, and they are underpinned by, a strong sense of inclusion throughout the school which is supported and facilitated by RE where children are encouraged to voice their opinions, and by Circle Time where relationships and feelings are sensitively managed. Pupils are also encouraged to understand differences throughout the world and appreciate other faiths. A comment from a member of staff sums this up: 'spiritual development is strong...we encourage children to be caring...we interact with each other very well'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The Collective Worship/RE coordinator provides termly planning for collective worship and all staff are involved both in delivery and feedback discussion to ensure progress and development. Staff also talk to children about how they perceive collective worship and a suggestion box has been introduced to receive their ideas, including their favourite hymns/songs. Records of collective worship, which include photographs, are regularly made and displayed. Over the two half days of the inspection two whole school occasions were held, the first being collective worship led by the incumbent and 'Open the Book' team and the second, at the end of the week, a celebration of kindness, thoughtfulness and achievement. This whole school recognition of individual effort and success spoke clearly of the Christian values which are so evident in all the school does.

The children assembled for collective worship quietly and respectfully, with all the members of staff, as music was playing. Excellent singing of hymns gave a very positive feel to the whole occasion and pupils were involved as helpers for the OHP to depict the words of the song and taking part in the dramatised bible story. On this occasion the story of a picnic developed into the story of the loaves and fishes with Jesus feeding the five thousand. The message was clearly stated that we must trust in God. Pupils were involved by Father Peter with questions about the story, by joining in another song and a prayer which concluded the occasion. Children left quietly as music played. Pupils communicated a real sense of enjoyment about collective worship and were very enthusiastic about the Rector's presence in school on these occasions and at Junior Church after school on Thursdays when many pupils attend.

The second assembly occasion also involved all the staff and pupils and was a celebration of kindness and helpfulness. Excellent and appropriate singing of songs, which all carried a Christian message, involved all the children. This was a real 'family' occasion where everyone was included and everyone applauded the achievements of each other. Prayers read by pupils enriched this powerfully felt occasion. A Foundation governor commended both collective worship and achievement assemblies as inspiring occasions and highlighted the pupils' contribution, particularly their excellent singing.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are good

The head teacher, well supported by the foundation governors, leadership team and the staff, is providing strong, creative leadership to promote and develop the Christian vision of the school and enrich the learning experiences of the pupils. This vision is clearly evident within the school's aims, which are displayed in the school and contained in the brochure. These can be seen in action in classroom relationships, the strong link with the local church and the incumbent's frequent involvement with collective worship. Provision of Junior Church and the regular use of the church for services and learning, and the strong, caring ethos, both for those within the school and the wider community, including children in Cambodia, further emphasise the practical reality of the vision.

Support for leadership from the governors, and the foundation governors in particular, is proactive with three governors coming into school every week to spend time in classes. A foundation governor is currently reviewing the Spirituality policy and has also reviewed the PE curriculum and special needs provision. The governors speak of their involvement in and contribution to, both the school and diocesan SEF. The chair of governors is a frequent visitor to the school and with the governing body is creating a more formal reporting system for governors' monitoring visits. This will include focused monitoring and provide a record of perceptions.

Staff speak very positively about their commitment to the school's vision and commend the family feeling which pervades all policy and practice. Staff state clearly that they feel valued for their contribution to the school and by being involved in

discussion about vision and values – ‘the Head includes us all and listens to our opinions’. The head teacher provides a very supportive approach to facilitate staff development and well-being and has created a sharing ethos which allows this. The school is well supported by the parents who speak confidently of their satisfaction with the education being provided for their children and of the welcoming approach from the Head and staff. Parents, like pupils, are asked for their opinions by the school on a range of issues including healthy eating and the need for a breakfast club and they expressed their appreciation of this inclusive attitude. Parents clearly knew this was a Church school and a parent governor commented on how Christian values are embedded in its ethos. The school is reported to becoming more and more popular for out of catchment area parents who clearly know of its Church status from the brochure. The strong partnership between the school and the church is founded in the excellent relationship with the incumbent and this provides a rich experience for pupils of Christian based collective worship both in school and in the parish church. The school is very much a part of its local community and has a good relationship with ‘Autumn Close’, a residential home for the elderly in the village, where children visit every week. The school also provides opportunities for parents to learn alongside their children, helping them understand better how to support their children’s learning and building up the concept of lifelong learning among the pupils. School, Church and community work well together in this village and children benefit from the inclusive approach taken by school leadership, governors and parish priest.