



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Creting St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

All Saints Road
Creting St. Mary
Ipswich
IP6 8NF

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk

Dates of inspection: 28 September 2006

Date of last inspection: 9–10 March 2000

School's unique reference number: 124770

Headteacher: Mrs Marilyn Spall

Inspector's name and number: Betty Barratt 203

School context

Creeping St Mary Church of England School is a very small school of 35 pupils who are taught in two classes. It serves a wide rural area with approximately half the children coming from outside the catchment area. The children are predominately White British from a wide range of socio economic backgrounds. The Headteacher and the two other teachers took up their posts in 2004.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Creeping St Mary as a Church of England school are good

A strong Christian ethos permeates the school and brings positive values and attitudes to teaching and learning. Pupils thrive in a happy, relaxed and secure environment. They respond extremely well to the very high expectations for their behaviour, and for their care and consideration of one another. Adults are excellent role models and deeply committed to promoting a strong, distinctive Christian vision for the school. Relationships with the local church and community are excellent.

Established strengths

- The deep commitment of the Headteacher and staff to promoting the distinctive Christian character of the school
- The Christian principles which are lived out in practice by the whole school community
- The high quality religious education and acts of worship, including all pupils and staff, and contributing greatly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- The excellent relationships between pupils and adults, amongst pupils and between staff

Focus for development

- Ensure that all pupils are achieving appropriately high standards in religious education by establishing strategies for assessing pupils' progress
- Establish procedures for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the distinctive Christian vision for the school, and the effectiveness of collective worship, to inform future planning
- Give greater emphasis to the school's status as a Church School in displays and documents

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

The school's very strong Christian values and ethos result in very high quality of care. Pupils are well supported and helped to flourish personally as individuals. Both they and their families are very well known. Pupils feel safe, happy and secure in a warm, welcoming and orderly environment. Relationships between pupils and teachers, amongst pupils and between adults are excellent. Pupils value the opportunities for them to take responsibility within their classrooms and as members of the school council. They welcome being able to contribute their ideas about many aspects of school life, and have made an important contribution to drawing up the school rules. Pupils are proud of their school, and feel fully involved in its many activities and visits which they enjoy greatly. They also enjoy taking part in church services and school assemblies, often taking the lead alongside the Vicar and their teachers. Their behaviour is excellent. Pupils are very caring, considerate and helpful to one another. In the Reception and Year 1 class for example, older pupils help those who are younger encouraging them to work confidently and happily. Parents appreciate the way their children grow in confidence and ability to relate well to adults and each other. Pupils respond very well to the very high expectations for them to work hard and to be responsible. However, the extent to which their learning needs are fully known, and therefore to which all are being challenged, is unclear as the use of assessment data to measure their progress is not fully developed. Displays throughout the school are vibrant and attractive, but do not reflect the school's status as a Church School strongly enough. It is not immediately apparent for instance, on entering to the school that this is a Church School, or from reading school documents including the School Prospectus.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship is regarded as being very important, and is central to the life of the school. Pupils are taught that worship is an integral part of Christian life, and that everything done in the school should reflect the school community's love for God. Collective worship has a significant impact on all members of the community. All pupils and adults participate fully, and share in taking the lead in school and class assemblies, and the fortnightly church services. These include the celebration of the major Christian festivals and saints days, and occasions such as the recent Harvest Festival. This was deeply appreciated by pupils, staff, governors and parents as it brought the whole of the local community together in worship and giving thanks. Church services also include a monthly service attended by parents and villagers which is much valued. Pupils say that they enjoy church services 'as God is there'. They participate meaningfully in worship, joining in prayer and in singing and playing musical instruments with enjoyment. Prayer forms an important part of school life. Prayers are displayed prominently in the school hall where there is also a worship table. Pupils often volunteer to pray offering their own prayers at the beginning or end of activities. Grace is said before lunch. Staff appreciate the opportunities for them to both lead and join in worship. They especially value the communion services at the beginning of each term. The Vicar plays a key role in supporting the school's worship both in school assemblies and church. Church services make an important contribution to developing pupils' understanding of the Anglican faith and practice. Pupils are introduced to aspects of liturgy; learn to understand patterns of worship and how to behave in church. Collective worship is very carefully planned and well resourced, and its impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strengthened by its very close links with religious education. There are, however, no formal procedures to evaluate its impact and guide future planning.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils greatly enjoy religious education. They relish the exciting opportunities for them to engage in the imaginative, well-planned and resourced 'I Wonder' programme. Teaching and learning are good and enriched by very good team work between the Headteacher, teaching assistants and visiting speakers who include the Vicar. Pupils are thoroughly engaged in a wide range of activities designed to encourage them to think deeply and reflect about interesting topics across different faiths. Recent topics have included 'I Wonder' about Jewish stories and 'I Wonder' about Abraham's family from a Muslim perspective. They are helped to learn through speaking, listening, and singing, playing musical instruments and creating artefacts. They listen attentively to clear presentations and highly skilled story telling. Pupils were enthralled by the story of Abraham and his family, and greatly enjoyed making members of the family and learning a fun song. Mixed age group work is very effective in enabling pupils to experience a range of activities, and to help each other in their learning. Religious education is regarded as being of outstanding importance in the school and as a core subject alongside those of the National Curriculum. It makes an outstanding contribution to promoting the Christian character of the school, and its close links with collective worship and the personal, social and health education programme, results in very strong support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Understanding of other faiths is well supported. The allocation of a whole afternoon each week culminating in an act of worship, and the lead taken by the Headteacher, reflect the great importance attached to the subject. Pupils make good progress in lessons, but the extent to which they achieve overall and the standards they reach, are not systematically assessed.

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

The head teacher's Christian faith and dedication to promoting the school's Christian character, permeates the whole school. The Headteacher believes that she is both a practical and spiritual leader of the school community, and fully acknowledges the responsibility this brings. The school's Christian purpose is clearly expressed in its aims and values, and staff appointments are guided by the need to ensure that these are upheld by those new to the school. Staff feel highly valued and are deeply committed to the achievement of the head teacher's vision for the school as a church school. They appreciate being consulted regularly, and in being involved in decision making and putting the school's vision into practice. They are excellent role models in the way their beliefs and values are reflected in their daily lives. The school's admission policy is fully inclusive and the Christian message made available to all families. Foundation governors recognise the importance of the school's distinctive Christian character, and are supportive of its aims, but they do not monitor or challenge the extent to which these are being achieved. Relationships with the local community are excellent. The school works very closely with the local vicar, the church and the community including the village nursery, the Women's Institute, the local Salvation Army and representatives of the Jewish and Moslem communities. It is keen to extend its links with both other denominations and other faiths. Regular questionnaires seek the views of parents and members of the wider community about how well the school is progressing overall. However, formal systems for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of its vision as a church school are not sufficiently well developed.