



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Alpington and Bergh Apton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Wheel Road
Alpington
Norwich
NR14 7NH

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk

Dates of inspection: 18 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 29 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 121147

Headteacher: Teresa Osborne

Inspector's name and number: Stephen Green 809

School context

This is a small school with children being taught in mixed-age classes. It serves the villages of Alpington and Bergh Apton, and is within walking distance of the church. There have been many changes to the teaching staff this academic year, with new appointments and a new RE co-ordinator. The parish has a vacancy following the departure of a rector who had been very heavily involved in the life of the school. The headteacher has been in post for five years. A new hall currently under construction will greatly improve facilities and the opportunities for parents and pupils.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Alpington and Bergh Apton CEVA Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

- There is a culture of high achievement which has generated results which are well above the national norm. This is in almost all subjects and age groups, and over several years. These reflect the commitment and skill of the school staff, and the Christian values which are at the heart of the school.
- There is a close relationship with parents, whose contributions to the school regularly enhance provision and support the pupils and their teachers.
- The school community has developed a new vision which makes the school's Christian status immediately evident.

Areas to improve

- To develop a greater understanding of the diversity and differences within the Christian faith.
- To involve pupils in the planning and leadership of collective worship, in order to give them a greater ownership of it.

- To improve pupils' understanding of the Holy Trinity.

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

The school has recently carried out a thorough review of its ethos, involving most members of the community and the diocese. The new ethos and aims reflect its Christian foundation and are immediately obvious to pupils and visitors to the school. Behaviour is of a very high standard. Parents and governors are keen to ascribe this to excellent teaching and the key Christian values emphasised by the school. These values emphasise mutual respect and thinking of the needs and feelings of others, and these are evident in the day-to-day lives of both pupils and staff. A parent who moved her children from another school, mentioned the culture of openness which means her older child now always feels listened to. Other Christian values are used in a themed way to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education to good effect. A good example is a unit of study around peace which the school has made to link with the theme of Remembrance marking the anniversary of the outbreak of world War I. The school works hard to develop personal spirituality, with many opportunities being made for prayer and reflection. A Prayer Week involved the construction of a prayer space in the library, and pupils spoke favourably of the way it was used both inside lessons and beyond to stimulate personal prayer. Religious education (RE) is stimulating and challenging. It develops many higher-order skills in pupils as well as developing their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths. Through their RE and support for a wide variety of charities during the year, pupils are gaining an understanding of the lives and needs of people who live in different cultures to their own. The many pupils and parents spoken to readily recognised the importance of RE in pupils' lives and the positive and substantial contribution it makes to both the character of the school and the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils demonstrate their support for the school's values by enthusiastically supporting a wide variety of charities, and by mutual support which was commented upon by several parents and governors. The school is keenly aware of the needs of various groups of vulnerable pupils and carefully monitors and supports their progress.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils, parents and staff place considerable value on collective worship (CW). Many parents were able to explain the impact it has upon their children's lives. One parent, who is not herself a regular attender at church, spoke of her young child trying to persuade them to attend church more often. Children attend services in the two local churches at least termly, and these are usually extremely well attended by their parents. As a result of these visits, children have an appropriate knowledge of how churches work and the main events in the Christian year. In addition, local clergy and church members have led CW, and run Open the Book training for the children. These contribute to pupils' biblical understanding and enable them to make links between the stories, the school's core values and their own lives. The school has made contributions to a monthly family service which the local church holds. Pupils understand the value of personal prayer as part of their own spiritual development, and spoke enthusiastically of their Prayer Week. The school is currently involved in a major building programme which will incorporate an outdoor reflective space as well as more space for shared worship. The children know that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, they have a limited understanding of the Holy Spirit or the significance of the Trinity. Pupils have had the opportunity to express their opinions about worship, and these have been noted and some adjustments made. They contribute enthusiastically to worship when asked, but they have not had any substantial role in planning, evaluating or leading worship themselves.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils' standards of progress and attainment across the whole school are above national

expectations. This is as a result of teaching which is consistently good and sometimes outstanding, and the Christian values which the school emphasises. RE is used to enhance other subjects, and learning from other subjects impacts upon RE. The school was praised last year for taking writing from RE to a literacy moderation (being the only school in Norfolk to do so). Learners value the subject highly and were observed using a range of higher level skills to great effect. They are encouraged to express their opinions and to do so in a way that recognises the value of those of other people. Assessment procedures are currently being reviewed and changed as part of a wider review of assessment and recording without levels which the school was asked to pilot by the diocese. Existing arrangements for assessment and recording enable teachers to plan work which is appropriate to the specific needs of the pupils. The RE curriculum enables pupils to acquire a sound knowledge of the Christian faith through a wide range of learning activities and learning styles. Pupils walk to the local church regularly and are occasionally transported to Bergh Apton church, which makes a strong contribution to developing their understanding of Christian traditions and celebrations. The school uses effective cross-curricular links and termly RE days to enrich the wider curriculum and to make their RE more meaningful. The subject leader is well informed and capable, despite only being in the role formally from the start of this term. There are many opportunities for the school's new ethos and Christian values to be developed in RE, and for it to contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children, and the school uses these effectively. Parents (including one who has a different faith), spoke positively of the impact RE is having on their children. The school is not yet outstanding because pupils need a greater understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith, to develop the links the school has begun to make with other denominations, and to complete the review of assessment.

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

The school community recently reviewed and updated the school vision. This emphasises the Christian values of respect for others, their values and ideas, and the fostering of an awareness of a personal faith. School leaders are very aware and committed to this new vision and the headteacher has worked hard to find meaningful ways to integrate this into the everyday life of the school. The school's Christian values have had a marked impact upon wellbeing and standards of achievement, which are very high. Strategic planning is based upon accurate and insightful self-evaluation which has been led by the headteacher and involved staff and governors at all stages. As a result everyone in a leadership role has an accurate understanding of where the school is and what it needs to do to improve further. Staff training is thorough and extensive, and is targeted where it can be most effective. The headteacher supports other local schools through her role as a Local Leader of Education, and the RE co-ordinator is working with other schools in the cluster and diocese to co-ordinate an approach to assessment. Although the present RE co-ordinator has only been in the role since the start of this term, she was able to shadow the previous co-ordinator and began to assume many of her roles last year. Parents are very involved in the life of the school, supporting staff and pupils in ways that are as diverse as fund-raising and decorating the staff room. This close relationship undoubtedly makes a strong contribution to the pupils' attitudes towards their school, and their impressive behaviour when there. There has been a tradition of close links with the village churches and much involvement of the rector in the life of the school. There is much to show that the close partnership the school has with the local parish is both strong and productive for both the school and the churches themselves. One example is the notice board that the local church maintains in the main school corridor to publicise their services and special events. During the present vacancy within the parish church, the church and school leaders are working hard to ensure that this partnership continues, through the support of other clergy and the diocese. Governors expressed a strong desire to find a replacement incumbent who will be able to continue this close partnership, supporting both pupils and governors. As a result of the importance placed upon them by school leaders, arrangements for RE and collective worship meet and in some cases exceed statutory requirements.

