

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Faith's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

25 Manor Road
Horsham St Faith
Norwich
Norfolk
NR10 3LF

Diocese: Norwich

Local authority: Norfolk
Dates of inspection: 28th November 2012
Date of last inspection: 6th & 10th July 2009
School's unique reference number: 121082
Headteacher: Mrs Katherine Thompson
Inspector's name and number: Dr Shirley Hall 390

School context

St Faith's is a small primary school with 86 pupils on roll, serving several villages on the northern edge of Norwich. The school has recently experienced a period of staffing instability. Over the years a close relationship has grown between the school and the local church community (LEP). The current incumbent had been in post for less than two months at the time of the inspection, and the school is carrying a Foundation Governor vacancy.

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

Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to review its mission statement and share its Christian vision with pupils and stakeholders. Good relationships exist right across the school, and there is a shared sense of belonging and commitment to a church school. Its strong links with the local church provide a joint focus for the village community. The school is actively planning further opportunities to enhance its Christian ethos, which are to be commended.

Established strengths

- A supportive "family" atmosphere underpinned by Christian values
- Pupils and staff who are confident in their church school identity
- A strong and mutually supportive relationship between school and church

Focus for development

- Establish effective mechanisms for the governing body to monitor and further support collective worship and church school distinctiveness
- Develop the role of pupils as regular worship leaders, and work with the local church community to introduce appropriate elements of Anglican practice into collective worship
- Develop reflective spaces and opportunities both inside and outside the school

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

St Faith's School aims to create a welcoming and caring environment founded on Christian values. Pupils and staff alike testified to the way in which they felt supported as they joined the community, from the network of "partners" which welcomes and befriends new children, to the staff who say "here you are free to be a Christian". Pupils are happy at school and the day to day care they receive is good. Children are encouraged to share both their problems and their positive experiences: they know that a note in the "worry box" will ensure a quiet supportive word from a staff member, whilst they can secretly nominate small acts of

kindness and sharing for the “Golden Moments” board. Achievements of all kinds, both in and out of school, are celebrated together in the Friday assembly and recorded in the “Superstars” book. The Christian value of service is particularly highly regarded, and linked especially to frequent charity fundraising initiatives which are promoted by the School Council. The children work purposefully and collaboratively alongside each other, and undertake roles and responsibilities across the school with enthusiasm.

Pupils are confident that the school gives them a good grounding in Christian teaching: “it’s a bit special being a church school because you learn about God and Jesus” (Y2); “ it gives you a good education for being a Christian” (Y4). The ability of older pupils to take these Christian teachings as a bedrock on which to discuss “big questions” was apparent in an RE lesson observed, when they were asked to make comparisons with Buddhist teachings. This was carried out effectively with both respect and interest.

A rich variety of after school extension activities are available to pupils. Two staff have recently initiated an “Explorers” club as part of the after-school provision, and as a way of “taking the church to the children”. Although initial take up is low while the project is embedding, the enthusiasm of those who do attend is high, and creative artwork produced at the club is already enhancing the school’s worship displays.

The school does not have any designated areas for reflection. A quieter sitting area is a part of the outdoor space, but children felt that noisy games spilt over into the area, and on occasions spoil the peaceful atmosphere.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school plans its collective worship around week long themes dedicated to Christian values, with staff and the incumbent taking regular turns as worship leaders. The collective worship observed was about Christingle (linked to the theme of “justice”) and included an invitation to the church’s service the following Sunday. Pupils of all ages displayed a remarkable recall of the Christingle’s symbols and meanings, which they had last encountered a year previously, as well as an ability to puzzle out aloud the beliefs behind them. Pupils also displayed an enthusiasm for hymn singing, on this occasion being able to sing confidently the Christingle hymn, which they did not previously know, unaccompanied, and to the tune of a known hymn. Children sit in mixed team and family groups for worship. This helps to reinforce the friendship across the age ranges promoted by the partners system, and gives opportunities for the older children to exercise their care for the younger members of the community.

Pupils take a leading role in worship only on set piece occasions such as the popular church services at festival times and class led assemblies, although they are actively engaged during the daily acts of worship by answering questions and occasional impromptu drama, whilst the “assembly helpers” help choose hymns and music. Prayer is a natural part of school life, with pupils placing prayers in a box in the hall, one of which is then used, and is part of the worship display, for a week. A similar system is in place in individual classrooms with the children writing either lunch time graces or end of day prayers, and several adults gave evidence of children’s readiness to pray extemporarily at these times. Apart from when celebrating the seasons of the Church’s year, the school’s worship does not consciously draw on Anglican traditions and practices.

Pupils are able to recollect and discuss thoughtfully the message of memorable acts of collective worship. A Year 2 child commenting on the story of Zacchaeus stated: “ it’s very good because it teaches you how to change your life and how to make other people happy”.

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

Over the last two years the school has worked to promote the school as a church school and to make the implicit Christian values which underpin the school more explicit and owned by all stakeholders. Parental questionnaires and individual parents’ comments demonstrate that this is appreciated by the local families who commend the open and caring nature of the school and the well- attended opportunities to join in celebration and worship either at the

school or in church. Families which are members of other church denominations are happy that not only do they feel included by the school, but also that the open nature of Christian teaching promotes faith discussions at home.

The relationship between the school and Horsham St Faiths church is strong, with regular services and events at the church being arranged and supported by the church community. Children and adults alike spoke enthusiastically of a memorable "time-travelling" Easter when church members dressed in costume had re-enacted the story of Holy Week, and displays around the school were evidence of other similar church based activities. The news and needs of the school appear regularly on the PCC agenda, and effective joint school and church committees are organised for occasions such as fairs. A small church team has recently undertaken Open the Book and Godly Play training in order to further support the school in its reflective RE and collective worship. The previous incumbent was a strong and popular supporter of the school both as worship leader and governor, and his successor shares the same focus, although he is still in the very early stages of his relationship with the school and community.

The governing body is supportive of the Christian ethos of the school and has carried out recent work on revising and reviewing the school aims to reflect this. Discussions on school policies reference the church school aims, although there is no method in place of consistently monitoring either church school distinctiveness or the provision of collective worship.

SIAS report November 2012 St Faith's Primary School, Horsham St Faiths, NR10 3LF