

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report
Sywell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Overstone Road
Sywell
Northampton
NN6 0AW

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Northamptonshire

Dates of inspection: 6 February 2013

Date of last inspection: 27 November 2007

School's unique reference number: 122030

Headteacher: Sue Gardner

Inspector's name and number: Nigel Pett 157

School context

This is a smaller than average rural primary school. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage, and few are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school holds awards for Artsmark, eco-schools 'green flag', foundation status for International Schools and enhanced Healthy School status.

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

The school is outstanding in meeting the personal needs of its pupils whose personal and spiritual development is very well supported through the distinctive Christian ethos, collective worship and religious education. They respond very well to the high expectations they are set, and achieve standards which often exceed the national levels. Leadership and management has a good understanding of the next steps the school needs to take.

Established strengths

- There is outstanding practice in which all children are valued and supported to develop their potential in a Christian context.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are exemplary and supported by the respect shown by all members of the school for one another and their prayer life.
- Collective worship and religious education enhance learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is very well supported by the school and church environment.

Focus for development

- Improve the formal monitoring by foundation governors so that they can accurately evaluate and record the impact of religious education and collective worship to help shape their questions about provision and to inform future planning.
- Sharpen the way that targets are expressed in development plans so that they can be easily measured to clearly show the Christian character of the school.
- Involve pupils regularly in the planning and leading of collective worship to build further on their good knowledge and understanding of the Christian gospel.

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

The school has an inclusive Christian ethos and lives its life through the Gospel. Children from the Foundation Stage onwards enjoy coming to school and their academic progress is achieved through the quality of learning and teaching which is enhanced by the high quality of care. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and learners respond very well to the responsibilities for each other, in their houses and school council. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good, as are relationships between them and with all of the adults in the school, not only at play but also in the effective lessons observed. Talking to groups of learners and parents shows that learners are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. They feel safe in school and are very confident in seeking support and supporting each other through a clear code of Christian values and rules. The varied curriculum contributes well to the opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well, as shown in the many stimulating displays. Parents and carers value the Christian ethos, and recognize it helps their children to develop as young citizens. The school environment makes a good contribution to the spiritual development of most learners through the presence of

Christian symbols, the prayer garden and some excellent displays, for example in relation to war, famine and homelessness. These displays often contain pupils' work and show how the learners take pride in their work. The superb quality of letters from Year 6 pupils who were attending a studio to record their own songs on the day of the inspection speaks volumes about their experiences and justify the judgements of outstanding provision and outcomes.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.

Excellent use is made of the new hall and of a range of symbols to establish a great atmosphere for worship. Pupils respect the fact that it takes place in a special environment whether in school or in church, and this gives good opportunities which develop their understanding of the Anglican faith and practice. In the collective worship seen the children were very involved with Jonah; acting, being the sea or reading. They behaved well and willingly responded to their roles or to questions and answers. Prayer is very effectively used in collective worship and at other appropriate times in the school day. Pupils are given and willingly take opportunities to use their own prayers which they do with great confidence as was illustrated in the outstanding spontaneous prayers of 5 pupils. When asked about prayer life a pupil commented – 'It helps us to become nearer to God'. The importance of prayer is further emphasised in the outstanding book of reflections just published by the school and the prayer garden. Learners sing hymns and religious songs very well and these are effectively chosen to support the worship. The impact is well seen in the way that the pupils can recall their experiences and show how there is a very good effect on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The focus for improvement at the last inspection relating to developing the multi-cultural aspects of collective worship has been very well achieved. The worship programme is most effectively planned to ensure that all the major Christian festivals are celebrated as well as recognition of those of other faiths. Pupils' understanding of the role of the Eucharist has also been well improved and the governors' decision not to establish a service is well documented. Although there are many strengths learners still need to be more involved in planning and conducting worship, and both they and governors in evaluating its impact on a more regular basis.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Learning and teaching have improved and the development focus for assessment has been effectively addressed; it is well used to evaluate learners' attainment and progress and to inform planning. The assessment shows that learners' standards have improved and reflect the requirements of the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus. The effective resources enable the teaching of the Christian faith and other significant world faiths. In the lessons seen teaching was good with some outstanding elements. Generally, the quality of questions was often very good and learners responded well showing how their knowledge and understanding were developing. Years 1 and 2 were enjoying the story of David and Goliath as they developed at an appropriate level their understanding of courage. Years 3 and 4 benefitted greatly from the use of a visual scene of a desert track and how this would have affected them as they developed their understanding of the role of being a good Samaritan. Overall tasks were relevant to the themes but did not always allow the learning needs of all pupils to be met. Pupils recount how they enjoy their work and there are some very good examples of written work illustrating pupils' standards but also that the quality of teaching is good over time. There are stimulating opportunities through learning about special books, parables and other religions which add well to learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The coordinator is giving fine leadership and the development plan is effectively structured although the success criteria for measuring developments are not clear enough. Parents commented that their children come home talking about the work that they have undertaken in their lessons, and that they learn from them!

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

The school has maintained its inclusive Christian ethos since the last inspection and raised its provision through the overall development of the environment, and by giving good attention to the areas for development from the last inspection. Leadership and management have some outstanding characteristics. The Ethos Statement is exceptionally well shared and understood and its values underpin the school's work. Parents consider that the education that their children receive is outstanding and that issues are well dealt with through the very good partnership with them. Their children endorse this view and are well involved in a range of extra-curricular and responsible activities. The headteacher, staff and governors employ

their distinctive Christian values to influence most aspects of the school's life. The staff and the governors have a very good professional partnership and they evaluate the school accurately. However, whilst foundation governors encourage and ask some questions about the school in its church context they must improve their formal approaches for monitoring and evaluation, and how they record it. Policies for collective worship and religious education are well structured, and have been effectively implemented with good improvements in standards and overall provision. The school has a sound understanding of its future development needs as a church school community. The improvement plan is well structured, with separate plans for RE and collective worship, but the measures to judge if the plan is working need to be sharpened. Opportunities are taken to use the Diocesan links and the parish church and other faith communities which help in developing learners' understanding of Anglican practice. A parent prayer group is a recent development and offers its members a real opportunity to share their life and to pray for the school.

February 2013 Sywell Church of England Primary School NN6 0AW