

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

William Marshall Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Wisbech Road
Welney
Cambridgeshire
PE14 9RB

Diocese: Diocese of Ely

Local authority: Norfolk Local Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 23rd January 2007

Date of last inspection: 5th – 7th June 2000

School's unique reference number: 121075

Headteacher: Fiona Rickard

Inspector's name and number: Marika Mears

School context

William Marshall Church of England School is a very small school of 36 pupils, mainly of white British background, taught in two classes. The school serves an isolated, rural community south of Wisbech. The school works in partnership with a larger, local school, with the Head Teacher working between both schools. Following several years of instability and a rapid turnover of staff, the staffing situation is more stable. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of William Marshall Church of England VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

This is a good Church school, which offers a high standard of care for its pupils, who are valued as individuals within the context of a strong Christian ethos. The school's high expectations of both staff and pupils are celebrated throughout the school, allowing pupils to achieve their potential. There is a good working relationship between the school and community, following a period of instability and temporary leadership in both school and parish.

Established Strengths

- The clear vision of the Head Teacher and Governing Body, which includes a determination to provide high quality educational opportunities within a secure and caring Christian environment.
- The commitment of the staff team to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment, in and around the school.
- The high standard of relationships pupils have with each other and with members of the school staff.
- The dedicated and collaborative staff team, all making an effective contribution to the school and reflecting Christian values.

Focus for development

- To make greater use of pupils, staff and Governors in developing Collective Worship, in leading, monitoring and evaluating its quality and effectiveness in school.
- Construct a policy for Spiritual Development that will encourage consistent spiritual growth for all learners.

- Build on the existing partnership benefits, enhancing learning experiences for pupils.
- Strengthen and broaden links with the local Church, particularly as a new incumbent will be taking up their post imminently after a lengthy interregnum.

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

The way in which the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners is good. Relationships within the school are good and are characterized by Christian care, respect, love and consideration for others. Members of the School Council said that staff worked very hard to prepare interesting lessons, as well as being kind and helpful if they had problems. They felt that staff were always ready to listen and liked the fact that they could make choices when involved in school activities, for example in choosing which country to represent during the Christmas performance, "All around the World".

The school environment is clearly well cared for "like a home" with attention to sympathetic decoration and attractive displays in a potentially challenging building. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities provided by the outdoor environment – the birds singing, the trees swaying, the dramatic weather features, and the ways they had used these to write reflective poetry and prayers. Teachers similarly use the outdoor environment for enhancing pupil's learning, often linking literacy and opportunities for reflection with Biblical stories and references.

Class displays reflect the Religious Education in the school and cross curricular links are used to develop opportunities for inspiration and spiritual growth. During the inspection in the Key Stage 2 Class religious artefacts and children's work enables pupils to consider the nature of religious symbols in a variety of religions. Art and literacy are used to display a Creation story from another culture, such as "Hope on a Rope" in the school hall.

Parents speak very highly about the high expectations for behaviour, participation and learning in school. They particularly welcome the partnership arrangement which provides further opportunities to enhance the already rich variety of extra curricular activities available. Pupils participate in a wide variety of charity events, well supported by the local community and parents. The school uses the Social and Emotional, Aspects of Learning (SEAL) Curriculum to promote a holistic learning environment. Both pupils and parents reported that children were confident in discussing their values and opinions, whilst respecting those of others.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs are well supported both in their academic and personal development.

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

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good. Despite the multi-purpose nature of the small school hall, care is taken to ensure that acts of worship take place in a calm and peaceful environment. Planning is good, drawing upon major Christian festivals, celebrations and world events, enriched with Bible readings, stories and a rich variety of music and singing. The daily act of worship is seen as a time of day for all the school to be together for singing, reflection and prayer. Pupils sing very enthusiastically, participate keenly during collective worship and can talk about what they have reflected upon, recalling stories, Bible readings and songs. The school is conscious of the need to involve pupils, staff and governors in participating, monitoring and evaluating Collective Worship. Representatives of the School council talk about ways in which pupils could become more involved in Collective Worship. Examples they suggest are writing and leading prayers, year groups leading Collective Worship and writing their own words to songs. The inspector encourages the school to take up these ideas from the pupils and explore them more fully.

The school's public documentation makes the value it places upon Christian worship very clear. The school uses the local Church for Collective Worship on special occasions and these opportunities are well supported by parents and the local community. During the lengthy interregnum the Head Teacher has sought a variety of visitors to lead Collective Worship, such as the Methodist Minister, Bishop's Visitor and Rector from the partnership school's parish. There is also a section for Collective Worship in the School Improvement and Development Plan.

Parents feel that Collective Worship is an important part of the school day and encourage quiet reflection, spiritual development and Christian teaching and celebration. They feel that the careful selection of music at the start and end of Collective Worship, as well as the variety of hymns used, enrich children's experiences of worship styles.

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

The leadership and management of the school as a Church school is good. The Foundation governors are aware of the school's Christian foundation and purpose, which are made clear in the school's prospectus. The Governing Body have supported the school and staff very soundly through a period of instability. They have accurately assessed the school's strengths and identified areas for further development perceptively, without being hindered by its small size. The Head Teacher has a boundless enthusiasm for ensuring that the pupils and staff have every opportunity available for both personal and school improvement and development.

The Governing Body have drawn upon the advice and support of the Diocese to foster and develop the school's Christian vision. The Head Teacher has been particularly resourceful in maintaining links with local Churches and clergy, to ensure that pupils benefit from their teaching and guidance.

Parents are very supportive of the school and there is an active school parent teacher association. Parents, pupils and staff become involved in the school through consultation and feedback opportunities. Staff feel valued and appreciated for their work in the school, both as spiritual leaders during the period of the interregnum and as role models implementing the school's Christian vision. Pupils and parents talk very clearly about the Christian values that the school aims to instil. Parents appreciate the way in which their children grow in their personal faith and spiritual development. Pupils talk about the shared values that ensure that the school is like a home, with them all being part of a big, happy family.