

***Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools
Report for Great Paxton Church of England
Voluntary Controlled Primary School,
Great Paxton
Diocese of Ely***



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of
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Name and address of school – Great Paxton CEVC Primary School,
Mount Pleasant,
Great Paxton,
St. Neots.
Cambridgeshire.
PE19 6YJ

Type of school - Primary

Status – Voluntary Controlled

Diocese – Ely

LEA - Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection – 19th March 2007

Date of last inspection – November 2002

School's Unique reference number - 110815

Name of Headteacher – Mrs. V Manning

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number – Mrs S Metcalfe – 249

School context

Great Paxton School is a small, modern school in the village of Great Paxton, near St. Neots. Most of the 113 pupils come from the village, though a few come from out of the catchment area. The majority of pupils come from white, British backgrounds. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. Originally designed as an open plan building, over the years four discrete classrooms have been formed. A number of smaller rooms that are suitable for small group work and to provide storage facilities have also been created.

Summary Judgement

Great Paxton Church of England school is a good Church of England school that is particularly effective in meeting the needs of all learners through its distinctive Christian character.

Established strengths

The leadership of the Headteacher is very effective. She gives a clear, firm direction to the school. The school has an atmosphere that is very positive and supportive, showing a very good, clear Christian vision of concern and demonstrating care for all. The school's very high-quality evaluation procedures ensure that further improvements can be identified and targeted effectively. Children feel special and valued, are secure, happy and flourish whether in class or about the school.

Focus for development

The school has already identified key areas for development to move the school further forward, with which the inspector agrees:

- To gather evidence of how children view their achievements and personal strengths
- To review the school's aims and mission statement so as to strengthen yet further the central role of worship in the life of the school

to which should be added:

- involve members from different Christian denominations in acts of collective worship
- seek out members of different faiths in the local area to widen pupil's knowledge of all those who live in modern Britain.

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

Provision is outstanding for all pupils, they feel valued and special and enjoy their work whatever their abilities. Pupils find the school very supportive of their personal development as well as of their academic progress. Successes in all areas of life are celebrated very effectively in Achievement assemblies. Provision is particularly good for those experiencing difficulties with their behaviour or those with a special educational need. There is a large amount of individual and small group support to enable all to fully take part in activities. Parents are very appreciative of this. Relationships within the school community are exemplary. Pupils and their parents feel very happy to discuss their problems and good systems are in place to guide pupils' progress. School rules are clearly written and well displayed in classrooms in pupil friendly language. These stress not only the rights of everyone but also the responsibility to give such rights to others.

There are obvious symbols of the Christian faith about the building, for instance the cross is a permanent feature of the entrance hall. Each classroom also has a display from the faith under study in Religious Education. Pupils' recordings of visits to places of worship and the local church are displayed about the school, with work very carefully selected and mounted, showing how staff value pupils' efforts. The hall is likewise given a Christian focus during Collective Worship with the use of a table displaying the Cross and the Bible.

Christian values have a pervasive impact on the personal development and levels of self-esteem, maturity and independence of pupils. Pupils willingly support others in and out of school. They raise money for charities and making sure that those sitting on the 'buddy' bench at playtimes have someone to play with.

Pupil's spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Because the school has very few pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, an International club has been established and celebrates links to schools in Kenya, India, Peru and Australia. Pupils are working on powerpoint presentations to be sent to these schools, focused upon life and festivals in Britain. Information is shared with the rest of the school in Assemblies and displays and fundraising for partners such as the Kenyan School takes place during the Harvest Bring and Buy Sale and with some Christmas events also contributing. The school recently had an artist

in residence and pupils focused on art from around the world, studying the beliefs and art of different countries and making huge models and painting in the style of other cultures, such as Aboriginal Dream paintings. Pupils have also made visits to a mosque and a temple, developing further their understanding of other faiths and cultures in Britain.

As the prospectus, in the opening paragraph, says:

“ Our school is based on Christian principles, where Christian concern is shown for all teaching, non-teaching staff, parents and children... giv(ing) them the good foundations that will enable them to make a positive contribution to their community and to the environment in which they live.”

So the aims and values of the school are prominent in the school literature and are to be reviewed in the next school year to ensure they are still clear and relevant.

Pupils' ideas are of particular value to the school. Work in citizenship for instance means that pupils' opinions are sought. Each year each class elects the members of the School Council. The council meets very regularly, collects ideas from other pupils, debates them and presents them to the school's senior managers. Feedback occurs after each meeting in classes' Personal, Social and Health Education sessions. New playground markings and break-time play equipment, for instance, came as a result of debates within the school council. This is a very effective way for pupils to learn about social living and democracy.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship impacts positively on all the work of the school community. Worship is consistently and recognisably Christian, following the school's Anglican tradition. Themes for each week are drawn from the Bible, using diocesan guidance, into a policy based on the school's aims, and are a key element in its Christian witness. This high quality cycle of themes has been established since the previous inspection. Targets for thoughts and actions are frequently given. The Assembly folder shows that the Head regularly reviews these to ensure they are still appropriate. Acts of worship are consistently well planned, imaginative and inspiring. Candles, Crosses and Bibles, are used well to help pupils focus on the specialness of Collective Worship to the school. As pupils enter and leave the hall music especially helps establish a spiritual atmosphere. Pupils do not sit in formal rows, rather in family groups, with older pupils being well placed and able to support younger children by modelling positive behaviour patterns and leading the singing. Each act of Collective Worship has a good, clear pattern including hymns and prayers. Pupils know a good range of hymns and songs as well as prayers, including the Lord's Prayer and the Grace. The head makes sure that all acts of worship include a clear period for reflection and prayer. Teachers use the theme for the week well in work in class discussions and when leading other Assemblies throughout the week. Teachers who are less confident at leading Collective Worship are given good guidance, including stories and prayers while more confident staff are encouraged to develop themes further for themselves. There are good levels of participation by pupils in such worship, especially in achievement assemblies and those led by the local vicar, one of the foundation Governors, who is made very welcome by staff and pupils alike, Pupils sing tunefully, listen attentively, enjoy her jokes and are very willing to answer the vicars questions as well as joining together in prayers such as the Grace. The Bishops Visitor makes regular visits to Collective worship, as do members of the governing body.

Other visitors, including charity representatives, visit the school to lead collective worship. The school also makes visits to the local church as part of their religious education lessons. This good practice ensures that collective worship and the Anglican tradition are foremost in the life and work of the school. The school now needs to seek out Christians from across the Anglican family as well as from the different denominations in the local area to widen pupil's knowledge of the breadth of Christian churches in Britain.

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

The Headteacher is a very effective leader of the school staff team. She has a very clear vision for its development, especially maintaining the very clear Christian ethos of support to all pupils, developing them as thinking, caring citizens as well as fully supporting their academic success. Her management skills are likewise of a very high quality. As a result there is a very happy atmosphere with pupils and staff confident and challenged in their work. The staff, both teaching and support staff are a good, coherent team as the head has effectively communicated her vision of the school to staff so that they are all completely confident and comfortable about their part in developing this vision further.

The high quality, supportive but challenging, governing body, led by an experienced chair, acts as a good, critical friend to the school, giving the headteacher high levels of support. All work together in a close partnership to monitor, evaluate and develop the school in line with identified needs from the School Evaluation Form (SEF) in the high quality school development plan. The school's Christian purpose is well thought out and communicated to parents in the prospectus and reinforced in all communications.

All who have contact with the school, including the local vicar, the governors, the foundation governors, the members of the parent-teacher association as well as pupils and their parents speak highly of the very positive relationships between all the adults and children. They all have confidence that any issues will be dealt with in a positive and sympathetic manner. The Head has a personal management style that encourages confidence in parents in particular. They feel that she is approachable concerning anything that affects the development of the children and their learning. The head in return is especially appreciative of the support of the staff, the governors, parents and the local community. She sees the school success as only possible because all adults involved fully support the Christian ethos and are committed to provide the best for all the children, regardless of their backgrounds, ethnicity or abilities. The school is able to offer pupils a very good understanding of Christian traditions in theory and in practice.