



DIOCESE
of
ELY

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Name and address of school

Orchards Church of England Primary School
Cherry Road
Wisbech
Cambridgeshire PE13 3NP
Tel. 01945 583799

Type of school

Primary (5-11)

Status

Voluntary Controlled

Diocese

Ely

Local Authority

Cambridgeshire

Date of inspection

2 May 2006

Date of last inspection

Not applicable

School's Unique reference number

133782

Name of Headteacher

Mrs Jacqueline Carpenter Cert.Ed., Dip.Ed.

Inspector's name

The Revd Michael Goater

School context

Orchards C.E. Primary School was formed two years ago from the amalgamation of a Church infant school and an adjacent county junior school. There are 329 pupils on roll (age 5-11), most of white British descent, though 7% of pupils are in the early stages of acquisition of English. The catchment area has a very high social deprivation index. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals or who have statements of special educational needs, learning difficulties or disabilities is significantly greater than the national average, as is the turn-over of pupils. Standards at entry to the nursery are low.

Summary Judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Orchards C.E. Primary School is satisfactory with some good features.

Established strengths

- The progress made in only two years since amalgamation to create a single institution with a shared vision, ethos and common values
- A commitment to the support and nurture of the whole child, and especially to the enhancement of pupils' self-esteem in raising expectations and valuing achievement
- A concern to take seriously the particular nature of the School's context, and to respect and respond to the needs of the community

Focus for development

- To make more explicit the School's underlying and inherent Christian values by relating them more obviously to its vision and practice – a focus for development recognised by the Headteacher with which the Inspector concurs
- To ensure that collective worship accords with the School's Christian foundation on all occasions
- To monitor the provision of PHSE with a view to curriculum development and to capitalise on the best practice

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

The School's provision, through its distinctive Christian character, in meeting the needs of all learners is satisfactory with some good features. The School's commitment to inclusiveness and the nurture of the whole child, coupled with its aspiration to raise every pupil's level of self-esteem, expectation and attainment are evident in the support offered to children with learning difficulties, and in the excellent initiatives of the Family Support Worker in outreach and liaison in the community. In school, a strong emphasis is placed on personal development through the recognition of achievement and open access to a range of extra-curricular activities from football to knitting, and on the establishment of a calm, orderly, safe and caring environment. Pupils recognise and appreciate this. Commendable efforts are made to consult the children in decisions affecting the common life through the School Council and to encourage a sense of responsibility for the well-being of all. Year 5, for example, had produced a detailed bid under the playground partnerships scheme for funding for a development project, and the School Council had been instrumental in obtaining a trim-trail. As a result, all the pupils whom the Inspector met were happy and confident about the building, mindful of others and courteous to a visitor. These observations accord fully with the ethos statement printed in the user-friendly prospectus and displayed about the school that Christian values are integral to life at Orchards in accordance with its historic foundation.

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory. The programme fulfils statutory requirements and draws on the contribution of staff and visitors, including the Incumbent, Bishop's Visitor, and the resources of the local Church. The majority of pupils responded enthusiastically in an assembly on the variety of human gifts. The approach was topical and well pitched, involving a puppet, soft toys and drama by the children, though it was rather tenuously related to the theme of the week. Enjoyable as it was, it offered only limited scope as an act of worship, and the records indicate that the use of Scripture and music to this end are indeed unduly restricted. The fable and its moral upon which the presentation was based were familiar to the older children to whom the Inspector spoke, and all pupils were encouraged to continue to reflect on the theme through the week by means of a 'target box' to identify and reward behaviour exemplifying the issues addressed. All the children to whom the Inspector spoke knew that theirs was a Church school, and a majority could identify the few Christian symbols about the building. None were used in the worship, however.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

The leadership and management of Orchards as a Church School are satisfactory with some good features. The School's self-evaluation is secure if sometimes unduly modest about the considerable progress which has been made since amalgamation two years ago to create a unified school. The Headteacher, staff and Governors share a vision for Orchards which is endeavouring to respond positively to the needs of the community it serves. While the School's mission statement makes no reference to Orchards' Church foundation, this vision accords well with the ethos statement in the prospectus and displayed about the building that 'The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice.' There is a determined and commendable effort to discern community needs and to implement policies and practices to meet them. However, these initiatives have not yet been fully related to Orchards' Christian foundation, nor are they always coordinated, thereby raising questions of accountability in this large, hugely complex and evolving institution. This said, the School Improvement Plan identifies leadership and management as a key issue for senior Staff and Governors; and the majority of parents

and members of the community to whom the Inspector spoke were confident of the sound conduct of school affairs. Perhaps the most persuasive and articulate ambassadors for the School were the children, however. Among senior pupils, there was genuine regret at the prospect of leaving, while one of the younger students claimed she could not even contemplate the prospect of life at a different school. Nothing could possibly match the superiority of life at Orchards!