

Castle Camps Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Bartlow Road,
Castle Camps,
Cambridge.
CB1 6XS
Diocese of Ely
Cambridgeshire
SIAS inspection 22 and 25 May 2006
Date of last inspection 18 and 21 October 1999
School's Unique reference number 110784
Mr Kevin G Sheehan
SIAS Inspector Mrs Marika Mears

School context

Castle Camps C of E (VC) primary school serves the local community and surrounding area which includes both rural and urban settings. There are 124 pupils on roll, based in 5 classes. 55% of pupils are from outside the catchment area, mainly from the local town of Haverhill, which is in the neighbouring county of Suffolk. The number of pupils with statements of SEN is higher than the national average, although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than the national average. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school has established good links with the village community, including the local churches. In their self-review, the Headteacher and Governing Body have provided an accurate and perceptive picture of the school, which gives a secure base for future development.

Summary Judgement

Castle Camps C of E (VC) primary school is a good and effective Church school. It offers a high standard of care for its pupils within the context of a Christian ethos and has well established links with the wider school community.

Established strengths

- The good behaviour of responsible and responsive pupils who are proud of their school and community.
- The secure and caring Christian environment provided by the Headteacher, staff team and Governing Body, ensuring good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The dedication of the Headteacher and staff team to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment.
- The strong relationships between the Headteacher, Governing Body, local vicar and other local Churches that actively promote the Christian ethos.

Focus for development

The school has already identified all of these areas for development in its own self-evaluation, which was seen to be accurate. The Inspector concurs with these, and encourages the school to base future development upon them.

- Review the public documentation available, including the mission statement and aims of the school, to demonstrate more publicly how the Christian Foundation is at the heart of the school.
- Develop a more formal process for monitoring collective worship, building on informal systems already in place.
- Develop opportunities for the wider school community to be involved in the self evaluation process so that it becomes a planned and organic process, driving school improvement.

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

The school ethos is good, reflecting its distinctive Christian ethos in meeting the needs of all learners.

Relationships within the school are good and are characterised by Christian care and consideration for others. Members of the school council said staff were kind and helpful towards them and felt that they were good teachers. A warm welcome is extended to all who are involved with the school, so that it is described by a governor as “the school with a smile on its face.” There are excellent displays in both public and classroom areas, many of these with clear Christian features, providing opportunities for reflection and identification with the Christian message, and making a contribution to pupils’ spiritual development. Year 6 leavers were proud of leaving a legacy for others to enjoy at school, such as large painted boards to encourage playground games, a welcome banner in the entrance hall, which combines the school badge with a Christian cross, and Creation banners for the school hall. The herb garden for quiet meditation was also created by Y6 leavers and was especially valued and respected by pupils.

Currently 55% of pupils are from outside the catchment area indicating that parents actively sought this out as a good school for their children. The school has recently been successfully re-assessed as an Investor in People.

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

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory, with many good features.

Themes for collective worship are well planned, helping children to focus on Christian values, which are evident in the relationships of all involved within the school community, or linking themes to events in the Church calendar and to world events. Members of staff, pupils, visitors and the local incumbent are all involved in collective worship. The pupils are attentive and respond positively with their responses, singing, and enthusiastic celebration of the achievements of their friends. Pupils have a good knowledge of Anglican practices such as the use of the Lord’s Prayer and liturgical responses, celebrating Church festivals and the use of the colours of the liturgical year. There is good evidence that the involvement of the local Churches and incumbent in the school’s collective worship programme has been growing over several years. This progress was referred to as “being on a journey together”, rather than described as a fixed point being moved towards, an indication of the common reflective approach to school improvement. The parish priest leads an act of collective worship each week and pupils speak warmly of his regular visits to school. Pupils said that they enjoyed their collective worship and gave examples of weekly themes that were followed. The varied nature of collective worship contributes to the positive spiritual ethos which is evident within the school.

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

The leadership and management of this Church school is good.

The Headteacher has accurately assessed the many strengths of the school and he actively promotes and shares the school ethos with the staff team and Governors. A member of staff observed that the Headteacher regarded pupils as individuals, rather than a potential level of achievement. The role of the Governors is influential in setting the direction of the school and there is a real feel of working in partnership with the Headteacher and staff team.

The school particularly benefits from the role of the foundation governor who is also very active in other management roles in the school, such as SENCO and RE co-ordinator.

There is evidence that members of staff are keen to develop their role within this Church school. The Deputy Headteacher has chosen to review the mission statement and aims of the school as part of her NPQH.

There is a clear dialogue between the Church and school’s leaders and managers. There was a warm description of a tea party for staff, governors and local churches hosted by a Church member, which has further enhanced and developed mutual relationships. There is a growing two-way partnership between the Church and school, involving all three local Churches. Pupils benefit from this strong sense of community identity, learning within a caring Christian environment with opportunities for a very rich and broad education.