

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Ropsley Church of England Primary School

School Lane
Ropsley
Grantham
Lincolnshire
NG33 4BT

Diocese: Lincoln

Local authority: Lincolnshire
Date of inspection: 1 December 2011
Date of last inspection: 6 and 9 March 2007
School's unique reference number: 120536
Headteacher: Mrs Ann Cook
Inspector's name and number: Paul Thompson 717

School context

Ropsley Church of England Primary School, built in 1874 and set in very attractive grounds, is smaller than the average village primary school. The majority of the 93 pupils come from White British backgrounds. A new headteacher and a significant number of new governors have been appointed since the last inspection. The school community is currently without an incumbent.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ropsley Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The ethos of this welcoming and friendly church school is securely founded on Christian values where respect, care and trust form the basis of excellent relationships between all members of the school community. The children are confident, safe and happy and achieve well. The leadership team including governors have an excellent knowledge of the school and a very clear vision for taking the school forward into the future.

Established strengths

- A very supportive and caring ethos based firmly on Christian values where relationships at all levels are outstanding.
- The excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the whole curriculum significantly contributes to the children's confidence and happiness.
- The high profile of religious education and the very positive response all children have towards the creative and practical aspects of the subject.
- The outstanding leadership and management team use robust monitoring and evaluating procedures and have an excellent capacity to drive the school forward.

Focus for development

- Systematically promote a core set of values from a Christian perspective and show explicitly how they directly influence the daily life of the school.
- Enable the children to have a greater involvement in the planning of collective worship.

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

The school community is extremely proud of the school's distinctive Christian character and everyone is committed to ensuring children reach their full potential. This is a very inclusive school where each person is valued as an individual. The children were keen to describe from their self audit of skills and interests, how they value each others' talents and work together. Parents say it is a very friendly school and that the staff are very approachable. One family in the armed forces said they have been to a number of the schools and 'this is the

best one they have been to'. The children settle quickly into school life and are very happy, secure and confident individuals.

Although the ethos of the school is clearly founded upon values such as respect, care and trust, some members of the school community are not fully aware how the values relate to the Christian story. To address this issue, the leadership have formed a visioning group to consider how they can systematically promote a core set of values from a Christian perspective and show explicitly how they directly influence the daily life of the school.

The revised curriculum is centred on spiritual and moral development. The '*Philosophy for Children*' lessons are very supportive in enabling children to consider different perspectives about moral issues. There are many opportunities for the children to pray and reflect during the day. This was not only evident in collective worship but during lesson time as well. For example, in religious education (RE), the children were given quiet time to reflect on the feelings of the shepherds as they saw a bright light fill the sky. There are a number of high quality displays and features around the school to stimulate spiritual awareness. Children confidently shared their thoughts and reflections about the awesome collage of the church situated in the school's entrance and the stained glass window in the corridor. Although space is at a premium inside school, the headteacher has plans to produce a 'reflection corner' for children to access at various times in the day.

The children's attitudes towards RE are extremely positive. There are many high quality displays around the school showing a very creative approach to learning both about and from Christianity as well as other religions. For example, the display on Hinduism showed photographs of the children's handmade diva pots. Another class had recently visited the local church to search for Christian symbols and research their significance. One child also enthusiastically described how their class made excellent use of technology and had a 'virtual tour' of a mosque. During the inspection, two RE lessons were observed and they were practical and imaginative. It was clear that recent Diocesan training for RE teachers had made an impact on the school as one of the practical assessment approaches was incorporated into a lesson.

The school has excellent links with the local community. During the inspection, parents were running a cookery club and two members of the parish were leading the choir. The school's relationship with the local church is very strong indeed. During the interregnum, the school has actively forged links with curate Father David and welcomed him into school to lead collective worship. The children have also worked closely with members of the church community to devise a person specification for the new incumbent to ensure he or she has the desire to become involved in school life. The children lead services in church at special times of the year and parents say they enjoy attending these events. The school council reported that they take responsibility for raising funds for local and national charities and spoke sensitively about responding to the needs of others less fortunate than themselves.

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

Everyone in the school regards collective worship as a very important part of their daily life in school. It is a very inclusive occasion where there is genuine sense of community and belonging. Staff say they enjoy attending worship on a regular basis, and since the last inspection, they are more involved in planning and leading worship. Governors have plans to reschedule the times of some acts of worship to enable parents to attend more frequently. On the day of inspection, the children were extremely well engaged in the collective worship led by the headteacher. The music upon entry to collective worship was calming and a very useful stimulus for reflection. The children are very familiar with Anglican traditions recognising that the candle symbolised Jesus as the 'Light of the World' and the purple candle for Advent gives us hope. The children confidently recited the Lord's Prayer and they maturely engaged in quiet reflection. The Lord's Prayer, school prayer, cross, candle and the children's work on 'Journeys to Bethlehem' are prominently displayed as a stimulus for spiritual development.

Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to improve the children's singing introducing a choir as one strategy. It is now a highlight of the collective worship. The children's singing was observed to be very uplifting and inspiring. The children continue to respond very well to the digital media that is used in collective worship. In the collective worship observed, the headteacher effectively used video resources to inspire the children to think about God's creation and 'how amazing everyone is'. The children said they really enjoyed the use of IT in collective worship and would like to see a wider range of digital

resources being used.

The monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is outstanding. The children have a particularly strong voice in this respect. For example, a pupil survey recently identified a slight decline in the children's enjoyment of worship and when the school council was deployed to investigate the reasons for this, they discovered this was mainly because the vicar had retired and no longer led worship. This issue was rapidly addressed by the school and they now welcome Father David who according to the children leads very interactive acts of worship. Although the children regularly and actively participate in worship through a variety of ways including drama, reading prayers and using puppets, the school does acknowledge that children could play a greater role in the planning and preparation of worship.

The school has recently invested in a resource to develop the planning and delivery of worship. The planning framework for collective worship now enables the children to develop their understanding of important events in the Christian calendar and explore a range of moral and social themes linked to the PSHE curriculum. The visioning group could also consider how the school's core set of values could be systematically incorporated into this planning framework.

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

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and many of the governors are new too. Through a very supportive and reflective approach, the headteacher and governors lead the school guided by a clear vision based on Christian values. Members of staff say they enjoy working at the school and there is good team spirit. It is evident that professional development for staff is excellent. For example, one member of staff has recently begun training to become a priest following support provided by school leadership. The RE coordinator regularly attends Diocesan courses and cluster meetings. She shares ideas from these courses with colleagues in school. The leadership provided by her is excellent and her passion and enthusiasm for RE is evident throughout the school. Staff regard RE as a core subject and feel well supported to teach the syllabus in a way that is enjoyed by all.

The foundation governors are clearly very knowledgeable about the school and offer an appropriate blend of challenge and support to school leaders. There is a named governor for RE who provides subject reports to the governing body on a regular basis. Governors attend Diocesan training and keep up to date with current initiatives.

The school has made excellent progress in all three areas of focus identified at the last inspection. To mark the achievement in broadening the pupils' understanding of other cultures and beliefs in the wider world, the school has recently received the Full International School Award. In terms of community involvement in collective worship, the school services at church are reportedly 'standing room only' and in school there is also a greater involvement of staff and members of the community such as choir leaders and Father David. As children become more involved in the planning of worship and the timetable for worship is reviewed, the school could expect to see more parents attending school based worship. The school is more explicit in presenting its Christian foundation. Displays around the school, documentation and the website now clearly show that the school is proud of its inclusive Christian character.

The leadership have a robust and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to successfully take the school forward into the future.

SIAS report December 2011 Ropsley Church of England Primary School, Lincolnshire
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