



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Orchards Church of England (controlled) Primary School

Cherry Road, Wisbech, Cambs. PE13 3NP

**Diocese: Ely**

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Date of last inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2006

School's unique reference number: 133782

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Williams

Inspector's name and number: Mr Stephen Cutts 495

#### School context

Orchards is a large primary school with 420 on roll, serving an estate to the north of Wisbech. Recently there has been a large influx of Middle European children mainly from Poland and Lithuania. A significant number of pupils have English as a second language. The current head teacher began duties in September. Prior to this the deputy head had been running the school for two years. The present incumbent has also been unavailable because of illness since the summer term. The church is almost a mile from the school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Orchards as a Church of England School are good

Clear leadership and a dedicated staff team are the strong features of this happy school. All uphold the Christian foundation and they are good role models. Everyone is valued and diversity is celebrated. There is an upbeat feeling with many ideas to further develop the family atmosphere and promote Christian values. The school environment is overtly Christian with bright displays and religious artefacts. Worship is a special part of the school day, but this needs to be more closely monitored. Closer links with the local church, though this is some distance away, should now be a major focus.

#### Established strengths

- A real family ethos where everyone feels valued.
- A team of staff where each individual contributes well to the life of the school, led by a new head teacher with clear Christian vision and good plans.
- Bright colourful environment with many displays that leave visitors in no doubt that this is a church school.
- The creation of a reflective and reverent atmosphere for worship.

### **Focus for development**

- Establish the role of the governors in the evaluation of collective worship.
- Create strong imaginative links between church and school, and include these in the school improvement plan.
- Ensure the provision of collective worship continues to be of a consistently high standard and examine its impact on pupils and staff, through questionnaires and discussions.

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

Orchards School is happy, welcoming and buzzing with enthusiasm. Christian values guide behaviour and planning on all levels and the impact of these values is recognised and understood by children, governors and staff. Children could explain how their behaviour affects others and spoke of "following Jesus' example". Much emphasis is placed on good relationships and team work. Some aspects of this are outstanding. The teachers are good role models and children are encouraged to be kind and helpful. A range of buddy systems are in place and older children enjoy roles of responsibility. There is a recently-formed school council. A variety of charities are supported each year. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well-established in this cohesive community where diversity is celebrated. Displays reflect the multi-ethnic make-up of the school in an environment that is bright, colourful and overtly Christian, with prominent religious pictures, models, writings and artefacts. Children feel safe and valued, and praise teachers for their support. RE lessons are enjoyable and interactive with role play and activities. A variety of faiths are included and lessons are often linked to current news items. A healthy lifestyle is promoted. The school has very good provision for home links with a full time family support officer, and each child's needs are recognised and inform planning. There is a well-attended breakfast club and a range of after school activities to develop pupils' interests and skills. Residential visits often draw praise for the pupils' good behaviour. The school meets the needs of its pupils by providing order, respect and opportunity in an overt Christian environment. A wide range of awards encourage good work, behaviour and attendance. There are plans to develop greater links with the local church.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship is seen as a very special time when all the school family comes together. It informs the thinking for the day and thus reflects behaviour and values. A wonderful reverent atmosphere is created as the children enter the darkened hall, each class led by its own candle. The candles are placed on a table with flowers, lamp and Bible. This concentrates attention and focuses thoughts. Different teachers lead assembly and this one was lively, relevant and fun. Children were used in role play to tell the story of Jeremiah and this was the aspect of worship that children told me they most enjoyed. They saw collective worship as a time to praise God, to pray to Him and to hear how he wants us all to live. There was much interaction which helped to keep the children's interest. This was a full school gathering but children were very attentive. Time was allowed for reflection before leading into prayers and one boy led the Lord's Prayer. Assembly themes follow the SEAL scheme of work and often form the basis of circle time discussions, giving children further time to reflect on the Christian or moral message, its relevance and its impact. Children I spoke to all said that collective worship influences their thoughts and the way they respond to different situations both in and out of school, using recent charity giving as an example. The hall has a large wooden cross and a number of good religious displays help to make this a special place to meet. The church is used for some festival celebrations, but the new head has not had chance to develop these links due to the illness of the incumbent since her appointment. Records of worship themes are clear. At present these acts of worship are evaluated and there are plans to introduce more-formal monitoring.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory**

The strong leadership team has a clear vision, rooted in Christian values, and there is great potential to develop further. The brochure includes information relating to the school's Christian foundation. Displays in the entrance hall, signage and the school badge show this to be a Church of England School. All relevant policies are in place and these are reviewed by governors who also visit school and sometimes attend special services. One governor reports back to the Church Council regularly about the activities of the school and events are advertised in the weekly church bulletins. School and staff feature in prayers at the church. Unfortunately, further links have been somewhat hampered by the incapacity of the vicar who has never had chance to discuss the new head's vision. The school has further plans to use the church building as a learning resource. Some governors need to be more proactive in the life of the school, not least in formal monitoring, as at present this aspect of their work is weak. The Christian ethos of the school is made clear to all job applicants who are expected to display empathy with Christian teaching and uphold the values of Christianity. Staff well-being is clearly important to the leadership team and to the governing body. There is a clear division of duties which means that several people have joint responsibility to maintain and develop the Christian teaching and learning in this school and they are united in their determination and enthusiasm. Despite recent difficulties experienced by the school, progress has been made on all identified points of action from the last inspection. These related to a vision based on explicit Christian values and collective worship that reflects the school's foundation. These are now recognised strengths of the school.

SIAS report January 2010. Orchards Church of England Primary School, Wisbech, Cambs.  
PE13 3NP