



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Empingham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane
Empingham
Rutland
LE15 8PQ

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Rutland

Date of inspection: 9 March 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 120177

Headteacher: Anne Platt

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Empingham Primary School is a small, rural school which is federated with neighbouring Great Casterton Church of England Primary School. There are good links with St Peter's Church. Almost all of the 73 pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is below average. There are a number of families who are serving in HM Armed Forces. A small number of pupils belong to the Plymouth Brethren. There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection. The executive headteacher took up post in August 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Empingham as a Church of England school are good

- This close-knit Christian family community produces confident, well-rounded children.
- The quality of the pupils' religious literacy is highly developed, well supported and recognised.
- Strong leadership, with a dedicated staff team and good governance is rooted in the mutual and substantial partnership between church and school.

Areas to improve

- Deepen pupils' understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith and enable them to meet people of other faiths to enrich their learning and support their spiritual and cultural development.
- Extend the experiences which pupils have to plan and lead collective worship.

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

This small, rural primary school holds the Christian values of hope, endurance, forgiveness and friendship at the heart of everything it does. It provides a nurturing learning environment where pupils are proud to belong. This is because the school is a welcoming, inclusive, happy family community, rooted in the Christian faith and the school's Anglican tradition. At Empingham, the wellbeing of the whole community is of utmost importance. Consequently, relationships and behaviour are good. In addition, attendance is well above average and there have been no exclusions. The school attributes this to leading by example and living out the school's chosen core Christian values, such as forgiveness. Children want to come to this school as every member of the community is valued as a child of God. Regular pupil progress meetings demonstrate the importance of each individual child. Pupils feel able to make a positive contribution to school life. Christian values enhance their understanding of their place in the world and their responsibility to others. Learning to learn values, such as resilience, complement the school's Christian values. Pupils show respect for the community they belong to. Their understanding is enriched by visits to their parish church. They show good knowledge of St Peter, who is 'the saint of Empingham Church. He was a disciple of Jesus and originally a fisherman. He chopped the guard's ear off but Jesus healed it immediately'. Whilst pupils can name the Archbishop of Canterbury and know he is 'the principal leader of the Church of England'; they are less secure in their knowledge of the Ascension. This will have a focus as a continuing part of the Easter story. They enjoy RE. They ask important questions, such 'Why don't some people believe in God?' and 'Do humanists have different values?' However, the school acknowledges that deepening pupils' understanding of the worldwide Christian Church is an area for development. This includes awareness of how Anglicans worship in different countries to enrich their understanding of the worldwide Anglican family. The school has also correctly identified that pupils' experiences of diversity of faith would be further enriched by meeting more people of faith and visiting their places of worship.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship at Empingham involves and engages pupils and is making a real difference in their lives and in the lives of their parents. Good examples include children saying Evening Prayer at home. This is because worship is recognised as an important part of the school day. Prayer features strongly in school life. This includes the school prayer, Lord's Prayer, lunch and hometime prayers. In addition, prayer and reflection areas are well used in classrooms. The prayer tree in the entrance hall currently reflects values and Bible stories for Lent. The prayer tree in the hall includes prayers for the appropriate season of the church year. Adults, including parents, value the close links with the parish church. Pupils are growing in their understanding of the Trinity. They speak of how 'God is three things, three sides, all good'. They explain God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit 'just like you can be a daughter/son, sister/brother, niece/nephew'. Key festivals in the church year take place in St Peter's Church, such as Harvest and the Christmas Carol Service. Whilst the benefice has been in an interregnum, without a rector, the school has been well supported by the Associate Minister. Good examples include helping the children to appreciate the rite of Christian baptism in church as well as leading worship in school fortnightly. He finds the children 'so responsive'. Children whose parents serve in HM Armed Forces work closely with a learning mentor. They visited the parish church to see the war memorial and then planned and led worship for Remembrance-tide in school. In this way they are able to share how proud they are of their parents who serve their country. Small groups of children plan and lead worship. They want to be more involved, which the school recognises.

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

The Christian vision and dedication of the headteacher in conjunction with the staff and governors ensures the school's distinctive Christian character is proudly proclaimed to the whole school community. The governors are all committed to ensuring that every person, whether adult or child, flourishes in this Christian community. Consequently, children succeed and achieve well. With a new headteacher in post, there is a renewed emphasis to move the school forward, in its own right; and with the school at Great Casterton, with its joint vision and strategic plan. Governors regularly focus on the distinctive Christian character of their church school in governing body meetings. All areas from the previous inspection have been addressed and there are clear priorities identified, going forward. The wellbeing of pupils is a priority and their voice is valued. The wellbeing of staff is equally well supported and governors ensure they receive relevant training for the roles and responsibilities they hold. Clergy as well as the Bishop's Visitor are welcome and regular visitors to school. Links are developing with the Methodist Church in Stamford. Staff and governor expertise is shared across the two schools. Stable staffing now provides excellent role models in their dedication and commitment to this school, benefitting the children and their parents. This includes the subject leadership of RE. Hence RE and worship meet the statutory requirements. However, the school has correctly identified the development of the RE leader in her role of monitoring and evaluation, and the diocese are providing local support for this. The monitoring that the senior leadership team and governors have done of RE gives an accurate picture of the subject. Parents are full of praise in saying how this family school embodies a caring, nurturing environment, producing 'confident, well rounded children'. Community links are very good. These include the school, church and village coming together for Remembrance Day and the Christmas and summer fairs. In addition, Empingham School welcomes new staff at the beginning of the year in St Peter's Church.

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