



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Thriplow Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
School Lane
Thriplow
Royston
Herts SG8 7RH

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire
Dates of inspection: 16th March 2009
Date of last inspection: 7th February 2005
School's unique reference number: 110835
Headteacher: Mrs Petrina Lodge
Inspector's name and number: Dr Shirley Hall (NS390)

School context

Thriplow Church of England School is situated in an attractive village in south west Cambridgeshire. There are 95 pupils on roll, mostly white British. 34% of the pupils are on the Special Needs register. The school attracts a significant number of families from outside of the village, including some from over the Hertfordshire border, because of its strong inclusion policies and because of its church school ethos. Pupil mobility is high. The school was awarded International Accreditation in 2004, and has Healthy School Status and the Active Learning Mark. The pre-school meets in the school grounds and there are strong links between the two, including a sharing of personnel.

The school is in close proximity to the parish church. The parish is currently in interregnum.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thriplow as a Church of England school are outstanding

Thriplow Church of England School is a happy and all inclusive school with Christian values firmly at its heart. The Christian ethos is tangible, and the pupils gain much from this environment. The school enjoys strong support from the governing body, parish and its parent community.

Established strengths

- The positive impact of Christian values on the school community
- The school's relationships with parents, church and community
- Confident pupils who feel valued and enjoy school

Focus for development

- To embed the monitoring of Religious Education and to implement effectively the tracking of pupil progress in the subject, in order to ensure that it is meeting the needs of all pupils.

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

The Thriplow acrostic (**T**rust; **H**ealth and Happiness; **R**espect; **I**ndependence; **P**eace; **L**ove; **O**pportunity; **W**orship) aptly sums up and forms the Christian ethos of the school. It is displayed in public areas and classrooms and consistently given a high profile in the weekly challenges for pupils. This strong ethos has created a nurturing and compassionate school community, where pupils feel supported and are encouraged to develop into well-rounded individuals.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, with a strong sense of happy community and team-working being apparent throughout the school. Behaviour and social interaction is normally very good as a result of pupils' involvement in the rewriting of the behaviour policy. The inauguration of a Buddy system for some lunches and special reading sessions has contributed positively to improve relationships across the school, particularly in the playground, and in the integration of the significant number of new pupils.. Pupils have the opportunity to nominate others for acts of kindness and thoughtfulness and present certificates to them in assembly. This responsibility is taken very seriously and effectively supports the school's strong culture of respect and positive affirmation.

Led by the able and involved School Council, pupils are enthusiastic fundraisers for a diverse variety of chosen charities, including the local church. There is a well established link with a hospital in Malawi and with the local Night Shelter. Pupils are encouraged to engage with their charities, for example when the writing group visited the Night Shelter. The School Council was also given the responsibility of re-naming the classes of the school and chose the names of insects with the specific intent of helping the on site pre-school (already named "Ladybirds") to feel included.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities, especially music (including the recent production of a CD of hymns), languages, sport and gardening.

The school's visual environment makes a strong contribution to pupils' development with stimulating displays throughout the public areas of the school which clearly proclaim the school's ethos, such as the Thriplow acrostic, welcoming messages in the languages spoken by pupils' families, and a multi-lingual "Light of the World" display. The school is currently involved in redesigning its badge, and adults and pupils are working on a way to link a Christian symbol to their current daffodil design so that their church school status is even more apparent. .

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The headteacher and staff see collective worship as playing an important role in the life of the school. Individual acts of worship are well planned and prepared with a Christian focus and linked to pupils' understanding and experiences. The use of the acrostic in worship, in particular, effectively helps pupils to relate to the worship theme and take the message of the worship on into their classrooms. Pupils recall confidently earlier acts of worship, and explore the relevance of the messages for their own lives.

Pupils play an active role in worship in a variety of ways such as leading music, or in the call and response of the school prayer, which was written by a group of pupils. The school also uses a prayer box which classes take turns to hold. Opened weekly, this gives the school the opportunity to pray together for the issues of immediate concern to pupils, as well as opening up children's thinking to the wider world.

The assembly hall is well set up for worship, including prayer banners created by pupils, the cross, and the Thriplow acrostic. The atmosphere in worship is engaged and attentive, with pupils joining in the variety of worship experiences with enthusiasm.

Significant Christian Festivals are celebrated in and with the church. Pupils greatly enjoy preparing for and celebrating these occasions, where many of the elements of the service are originated by them, and the service is child led. Parents also appreciate the special atmosphere of these services, as the growing numbers attending testify. There is also

evidence that the enthusiastic way in which children share their collective worship experiences at home has encouraged families to begin to attend family worship at Thriplow Church on Sundays.

The school ends each day with prayers in the classrooms, frequently using prayers prepared by the pupils. This brings a sense of completion and “sending out with purpose” to the day, and is an important moment for pupils, who expect to have this opportunity for prayer as a class, even when the last event on their timetable has been collective worship. Each class has its own freestanding cross for use at prayer time, and in some rooms this is an actual prayer corner or display.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school complies with the legal requirements for the teaching of RE. Since the last inspection the policy has been updated and reviewed and high quality artefacts and resources have been purchased. The subject leader for RE has been in post for a year. He has begun to assess the pupils’ work, analyse teachers’ planning, and conduct lesson observations. RE professional development (CPD) has figured in staff meetings and the school hosts termly Diocesan RE meetings. All of this is beginning to impact on the quality of teaching and learning in RE.

The planning of RE is detailed and differentiated, with success criteria for pupils. RE is linked to other areas of the curriculum, and there was evidence of this both in the classrooms and in displays around the school. The teaching of RE seen during the inspection was good overall. In all classes the objectives were effectively shared and reviewed in the lessons. In the Foundation and Key Stage One classes, the pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the church was evident in the open-ended question and answer sessions. This was linked with their own personal and social development and knowledge of the world (Attainment Target Two of the Syllabus). In Key Stage Two classes were working on Hinduism and Sikhism using a rich variety of resources, including ICT, artefacts and creative visualisation. The activities in each lesson observed were differentiated, but were not always challenging enough for the higher ability. A scrutiny of pupils’ work at each Key Stage showed levels of attainment to be in line with the appropriate QCA levels for RE for their age.

In the context of collective worship, pupils of all ages were observed to demonstrate impressive recall of the story of John the Baptist and reflect upon his role, which was an indication of their ready familiarity with the Bible achieved through both RE and collective worship.

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

The headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school which is firmly based on respect – of self, each other, the environment and of God. She is well-supported by her staff, who feel valued and work well together as a professional team to support and challenge the pupils and each other. The effective governing body strongly supports the Christian ethos of the school, and helps strengthen and monitor this through the performance management objectives it sets the headteacher. Governor monitoring of collective worship is also in place.

The link between church and school is a strong one, with one of the churchwardens being an active foundation governor. Termly school and church planning meetings facilitate school visits to the church for RE, worship and other purposes, and allow for planning of joint events and for church members to support RE and collective worship in school. The school regularly promotes events and services at the church through its weekly newsletter, and the headteacher writes for the Parish News. The school is also well supported by its Bishop’s School Visitor.

The school works well with its immediate local community, notably during Thriplow Daffodil weekend when pupils write the “Thriplow Times”, give displays of dancing and singing, and the school itself is open as a base. The on site after-school club is open to pupils from the neighbouring village school of Fowlmere and provides an opportunity for children to mix across communities.

Parents are supportive of the school and know that their children benefit from its safe, caring, Christian environment. Communication between the school and the families is very good, and this positive partnership supports the pupils in their learning and personal development. The mother of a Reception child wrote: "(my child) was disappointed that there was no school on Sunday!"

SIAS report March 2009 Thriplow (VA) Church of England School SG8 7RH