



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Creeting St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

All Saints Road, Creeting St Mary, Ipswich IP6 8NF

**Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

Local authority: Suffolk

Date of inspection: 6 July 2009

Date of last inspection: September 2006

School's unique reference number: 124770

Headteacher: Lyn Spall

Inspector's name and number: Simon Windmill 182

#### School context

Creeting St Mary is a very small rural primary school serving the village of Creeting St Mary. Over half the pupils come from outside the catchment area. Most pupils are White British, and the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than in most schools, and includes pupils with social, emotional, speech, moderate learning difficulties or medical conditions. The school has Activemark and Healthy Schools awards.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Creeting St Mary as a Church of England school are outstanding

Creeting St Mary's Christian ethos and values are embedded in school life and have a strong positive influence on pupils' values and attitudes. The school creates a family atmosphere which is evident to all. Collective worship lies at the centre of the school's life and work.

#### Established strengths

- The school's Christian care, which sustains the supportive relationships between pupils, staff and governors
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher
- The innovative linking of collective worship with religious education (RE)
- Pupils' behaviour

#### Focus for development

- Involving more members of the wider community with the life of the school
- More opportunities for pupils to read or say their own prayers in collective worship
- Formally evaluate the impact of collective worship on pupils
- Review the profile of the visual signs of the school as a church school

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

The headteacher, staff and governors see the school's Christian ethos as central to its life. Care and support for pupils and staff is outstanding, and demonstrates Christian values, reflected in the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Pupils say they feel valued and safe. Some pupils have significant special educational needs, which the schools manages exceptionally well.

Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils have a say in making the rules through an effective School Council. They know the rules, and the consequences if they break them. They also feel they are fair. Pupils get on exceptionally well with each other, and with staff, who provide excellent role models.

Pupils readily approach staff with any problems they have, knowing that the staff will help them. Excellent relationships also successfully support pupils in developing their self-confidence and independence. Pupils say they really enjoy school – one said, "I'm really happy to be at this school - just love being here!"

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The vicar makes an excellent contribution to RE, collective worship and pupils' spiritual awareness. She also has a pastoral role for pupils and staff. Relationships between the school and the church are good and very productive.

Pupils' have a high awareness and concern for the needs of others, and willingly help to raise money for charities, such as the Tear Fund. The school's Christian identity is reflected by a cross in the entrance, and excellent displays and craft work based on Christian symbols around the school.

**The impact of collective worship is outstanding**

The head, staff and pupils see worship as central to school life. It is soundly based on Christian values, and always includes prayer, singing and teaching. Prayers are usually said at lunchtime and at the day's end.

Collective worship and RE are directly linked through 'I Wonder...', an innovative and very effective weekly RE lesson, which then dovetails into the act of worship. Working this way makes it possible to forge direct links between RE lessons and the acts of worship, which enhances pupils' development in both areas.

Pupils and staff see worship as the focal point of each day. Pupils say they enjoy and value it, especially when they take part by reading prayers. One pupil said "I like assembly because it helps me learn about God, and shows me how I should behave." All teaching staff are willing to lead worship.

Pupils have a very mature understanding of the styles and purposes of prayer, like saying thanks or sorry, or asking for help, healing, or forgiveness. One pupil said, "I like having time for prayer when I feel stressed," and another said, "Prayer gives me a chance to deal with things that worry me."

Worship is well planned, reflecting Christian values and celebrating the main church festivals. These are held in the church. Anglican responses are used in collective worship, and the traditional form of the Lord's prayer is used so that it links with the church tradition. Worship is recorded and monitored, and informally evaluated for its impact on pupils.

### **The impact of religious education is outstanding**

Religious education is a central subject in the curriculum, and is seen as a vital part of pupils' learning by teachers, parents and pupils. It covers Christianity and other faiths, and is based on the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus. It is also exceptionally well linked with collective worship themes through 'I Wonder' sessions.

Pupils greatly enjoy RE, and make good progress in it, comparable with their progress across the curriculum. They are able to relate what they learn about Christianity and other faiths to their own lives. Their understanding of different faiths is developed through their stories, rituals and traditions. They are encouraged to deepen their understanding by asking questions of themselves as well as asking their teachers.

Lessons are well planned, with a wide range of activities to stimulate learning, such as drama, discussion, individual and group work. This helps to keep pupils interested in their lessons, and by giving them opportunities to work in different ways learning is made more accessible to pupils with difficulties. A good balance is maintained between 'learning from' and 'learning about' religion, which helps pupils to understand both aspects of RE.

Standards of teaching and learning in religious education are high, and pupils' work shows excellent progression over time. The cross-curricular approach of 'I Wonder' enhances pupils' learning and understanding. RE also feeds into pupils' spiritual and moral development, as does the recently installed area for prayer and quiet reflection, which pupils value highly. Sufficient time is allocated to RE, which is well resourced with suitable artefacts.

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

The headteacher gives outstanding leadership to the school, and is exceptionally well supported by the staff and governors. Between them they promote a distinctive and active Christian vision for the school, with Christian values underpinning its life and work. Classing RE as a central subject reflects the importance of its place in the curriculum.

The school's commitment to responding to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, and the excellent results which follow, is a shining example of the strong Christian influence evident in all aspects of the school's life.

The staff feel highly valued and involved in the school's development. They all work well together, and enjoy the support given by the governors. This contributes greatly to the happy and supportive atmosphere among staff.

The partnership between school, parents, church and the wider community is excellent. Links with the church are maintained through the Vicar and Foundation governors. The school also has links with Bishop Nigel, and with the world-wide church through Bishop Tom of Wellington (New Zealand), who visited the school recently. The school benefits from regular prayer support from staff, parents, governors and the church.

Parents are highly satisfied with the school – one said, "The school has a real family feeling – and the children always come first." Members of the wider community also hold the school in very high regard. They acknowledge that its successful and purposeful family atmosphere is generated through its caring Christian relationships. Parents and the wider community feel well informed about the school's activities.

Recommendations from the previous inspection were assessing pupils' progress in RE, monitoring and evaluating collective worship, and using displays to raising the profile of the school's Voluntary Aided status. Good progress has been made in these areas, but the school feels it wants to develop them even further.