

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Foston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Foston,
York
YO60 7QB

Diocese: York

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Date of inspection 9th June 2011

Date of last inspection: 12th November 2008

School's unique reference number:121492

Headteacher: Mrs Sarah Moore

Inspector's name and number: Mr R D Masterton No. 483

School context

This is a small rural school of 25 pupils that serves the villages of Foston and Thornton le Clay in the district between York and Malton in North Yorkshire. The proportion of children on the special needs register is significantly above average. The school works in collaboration with Terrington Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary school under one head teacher. The parish church is one mile from the school but there is a Methodist Chapel nearby with which the school also works closely.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Foston School as a Church of England school are good.

Good leadership and new ways of working through collaboration have enabled Foston to improve significantly since the previous SIAS inspection and cross grade boundaries. It is a school that embodies a commitment of care not only to the children educated there but to the village community it serves. By fully exploiting the advantages of collaboration with Terrington School and with more confident use of self evaluation techniques by governors, the school has the potential quickly to become an outstanding example of a small church school.

Established strengths

- The good relationships and mutual support between children and adults in this small school that feels like a close family.
- School effectiveness in helping children with diverse learning needs to achieve well and grow in maturity.
- The Christian-inspired commitment of the school to its local village community.

Focus for development

- Improve the use of formal self evaluation by foundation governors in order for them to identify the detailed ways in which the school may further improve as a church school.
- Within school collective worship, extend children's experience of Anglican traditions and practice.
- Explore ways in which collaboration can help develop spirituality by giving more opportunities for children of similar ages to talk and think together.

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

Children at Foston CE Primary School grow to become, kind, curious, responsible, outstandingly well behaved and enthusiastic learners who become fascinated with the skills and the ideas they acquire. They are especially conscious of a Christian-inspired expectation that they will care for one another and for others needing help. Their many contributions that help the school serve its community, some of which they initiate themselves such as visiting the elderly, helping run a Post Office and raising money for charities, stem directly from their understanding that to do so is Christianity in action. Such understanding colours relationships throughout this small family-like school and conflict is absent. Parents recognise this as a key characteristic of the school and are very supportive. Teachers are skilled at enabling children with wide age ranges and at varying stages of learning to work co-operatively together and they are supported by the great willingness of children to help one another. Children's spiritual development is good. Older children from many year groups readily speak about what they have learned about Christianity and are able to discuss difficult ideas with some mature objectivity, for example in considering whether the events of Easter are real history or just a story. The inspiration they receive from their collective worship and religious education (RE) gives them the knowledge and confidence to do this but

their ability to explore ideas through group discussion has some limitations due to the very small number of children of similar ages. In general the school is very effective in meeting children's needs which are many and varied given the high proportion of them needing additional help. Parents of such children are now increasingly turning to the school as they know that children succeed. The very small school building limits the extent to which all varied aspects of learning can be stimulated through display. Christian messages are present but there is not really sufficient space indoors for much visual stimulation to be offered and with a place for children to reflect and perhaps contribute prayers. The grounds offer better space for activities that promote spirituality. Christian values are well incorporated into school policies for behaviour, collective worship, RE and bullying. Many curriculum topics are broadened to include dimensions arising from Christian culture, beliefs, and teaching.

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

Collective worship is mentioned repeatedly by children as embodying the special character of their school. They enjoy and value this experience that brings their school together and which is led by their teachers and other contributors such as the parish priest and Methodist minister. Children contribute their own prayers and the school has established a tradition that each Year 6 pupil, helped by younger ones, will lead an act of collective worship in the term before they leave. Collective worship helps children to approach some difficult ideas such as when a visiting Methodist lay worker used a scientific demonstration of burning to put over the idea of people needing the 'oxygen' of God's love in their lives to children in Key Stages 1 and 2. Collective worship is also characterised by enthusiastic hymn singing. It uses music, symbols, a lighted candle, and prayer but in general pupils have a limited experience of Anglican (and Methodist) worship traditions such as the uses of some liturgy and familiarity with services such as communion. Children are taught about the Christian marriage service and baptism. The school seeks to make collective worship inclusive for the whole community but respects and cares for children whose parents do not wish them to attend. Collective worship is planned around weekly themes that take account of the church calendar, some other faith festivals, school topics and significant current events. This offers a secure framework to the head teacher and visiting contributors. Foundation governors attend some of the school collective worship but do not currently contribute to its planning. Its impact is reviewed with children's opinions included in order to make collective worship more effective. Themes from collective worship have directly inspired some of the community action the school has taken to improve the lives of other people. Both the local church and the Methodist chapel are used regularly on special occasions and give parents the opportunity to join in - which they cannot do when collective worship is held in the small class rooms. These occasions are very popular.

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

The head teacher has provided focussed and purposeful leadership that has brought about significant improvement in Foston as a church school that is now able to meet a very wide range of children's learning and social needs. The collaboration with Terrington School has strengthened provision with new cross-school leadership responsibilities, that now include collective worship and RE, and with richer opportunities for children's experience and learning. Foundation governors make a strong contribution, evaluating church school provision and securing a wholehearted commitment to Christian distinctiveness among all members of the governing body. With school staff they have undertaken training to help them offer support and challenge. The school aims and mission firmly embody the message that the school operates with a Christian ethos and this is widely understood by children and parents. The school uses the National Society (NS) toolkit for self evaluation with some rigour. School managers have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and where it can be improved and have taken advantage of collaboration, to enrich learning opportunities. Issues identified by the previous SIAS inspection have been tackled effectively. However governors are not themselves using the NS toolkit robustly to help identify what Foston needs to do to become outstanding as a Church of England School. There is cohesion of purpose among school staff to safeguard and develop the Christian character of the school. All teachers have been given training in leading collective worship and there is much mutual professional support in the close daily work of the small staff team. Links with local worshiping communities are good. The school makes an outstanding contribution to its local community through direct action to support people and charities and even to safeguard some Post Office services for villagers. The school is actively promoting links with communities far beyond the village to broaden children's horizons and knowledge of the world wide church. There is a growing confidence in the community for the work of the school and this is indicated by the significant increase in the numbers on roll over the last two years.