



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Debenham High School: A Church of England Academy

Gracechurch Street
Debenham
Suffolk
IP14 6BL

Diocese: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Local authority: Suffolk
Dates of inspection: 11th December 2012
Date of last inspection: 26th February 2008
School's unique reference number: 124860
Headteacher: Mrs Julia Upton
Inspector's name and number: Kathryn Wright 436

School context

This is a smaller than average 11-16 secondary academy serving its catchment and wider community. Some parents choose the school specifically because of its Christian ethos. The headteacher has been in post since April 2012. The local church is a short walk from the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Debenham High School as a Church of England school are outstanding

The Christian character of the school is clearly advocated by all members of the community. The Christian ethos is firmly embedded in all aspects of school life; a renewed emphasis on the Christian vision of the school and the values which underpin it has led to further links with the local church and to increased opportunities for the spiritual development within a Christian framework.

Established strengths

- All aspects of school life are rooted in the Christian ethos
- The commitment of the leadership team to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all members of the school community
- The pastoral care provided by the school within a Christian framework of compassion and restoration
- The importance of religious education in contributing to the Christian character of the school

Focus for development

- Formalise the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by foundation governors and pupils
- Review and revise the current policy and planning of collective worship to ensure the Christian values are explicit and referenced to biblical teachings
- Explore ways of articulating the Christian values more explicitly with pupils and parents, for example through the development of the covered way area and through the website.

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

The values of compassion, generosity and respect lie at the heart of this Christian school. Parents say that this 'is a school which lives its Christian ethos', whilst, pupils believe that 'Christian ethics shine through'. The school motto 'Treat others as you would like to be treated' is understood by pupils as biblical teaching, and its outworking is seen through the relationships pupils have with one another and the wider community. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils articulate their understanding of spirituality and are confident to talk openly about faith and belief. Pupils encounter Christian values in all aspects of the curriculum, for example honesty and love are evident in the teaching of PSHE and Business Studies whilst prejudice was explored in an English lesson. Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school and is highly valued by the school community. RE plays an important role in enabling pupils to understand Anglican faith and practice, and provides opportunities for personal development through an annual retreat for Year 7 pupils. Pupils are actively prepared for adult life, and each is valued as a child of God. This is evident through the exceptional pastoral care provided by a dedicated and compassionate team. Pupils demonstrate the importance of Christian service towards the local and global community through charity giving, through peer mentoring and through the Young Enterprise scheme, which they organise and plan. The school environment provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on Christian festivals.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship has an important place within the life of the school. Pupils spoke about worship reminding them that they went to a Christian school and the importance of meeting together as a community. Collective worship is led effectively by the senior leadership team, the rector and the local Christian youth worker. The Christian faith and values lie at the heart of worship, and on the day of the inspection the theology of the incarnation was explored through reference to the season of Advent. This good act of worship allowed pupils to engage with biblical teachings, and provided an opportunity to think about challenging questions. Pupils were given little time to reflect on the message during the act of worship; nonetheless, they spoke about regular opportunities to pray during worship at other times and valued worshipping in the local church at Remembrance and at festival times. Pupils have opportunities to lead worship regularly, and a range of approaches is used ensuring engagement. During the inspection a 'Prayspace' had been set up to mark Advent. This was a new initiative, and made a profound impact on the pupils. Some pupils spoke of the value of 'just having time to be', and of 'a weight-being lifted' from them. The prayer stations were creatively designed to be inclusive of all, yet used theological language to develop pupils' religious literacy. Staff and parents particularly appreciate the Eucharist which takes place at key points in the year. The monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is currently underdeveloped, and this has led to some inconsistencies in tutor based worship. Whilst Christian values form the basis of worship, there is no systemised planning to ensure pupils understand the biblical teachings which underpin them.

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

The Christian vision is articulated clearly by the inspirational leadership team, and the headteacher has created a new impetus for developing this further. All staff are engaged in the outworking of Christian values, and this is seen in policies relating, for example, to behaviour and to sex and relationships education. The quality of care for the whole community, including at times of transition, is outstanding. A 'family atmosphere' has been created so that everyone works together as a team. Church school issues are clearly identified on the school improvement plan, and the development points from the previous inspection have been met. Links with the church have grown since the last inspection; this was particularly evident during a time of bereavement, and through additional visits and projects taking place. The foundation governors provide good support to the school and are involved in the school's self-evaluation as a church school. They are regular visitors to the school and are currently reviewing the collective worship policy. The school places high value on staff professional, as well as spiritual, development and ensures opportunities are

provided for both. New members of staff are inducted well into the school, and the Christian ethos is explained clearly. Parents hold the school in high esteem, saying it is openly Christian and welcoming to all. The partnership between the Diocese and school is strong, and this was a key factor when converting to academy status.

SIAS Report Debenham High School, Suffolk IP14 6BL December 2012