

Lythe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Street

Lythe

Whitby

YO21 3RT

Diocese: York

Local authority: North Yorkshire

Date of inspection: 5 July 2012

Date of last inspection: 8 May 2009

School's unique reference number: 121507

Headteacher: Mrs Andrea Foord

Inspector's name and number: Mr Malcolm Price (627)

School context

Lythe Primary School is situated in attractive surroundings in a small village on the outskirts of Whitby and near to the North Yorkshire Moors. It serves the village community although the majority of pupils come from other villages in the surrounding area. There are currently 108 pupils, most of whom are of White British origin. The local church, St Oswald's, is nearby.

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

The Christian character of the school is woven into its daily life and is demonstrated in the confidence and maturity with which children speak of spiritual matters. The school's focus on its distinctiveness has created a happy, purposeful and inspiring environment in which everyone is valued and nurtured and where children enjoy learning and make good progress. Strong leadership and teamwork have created a highly successful community, based around positive and caring relationships, which seeks to promote emotional and spiritual growth. Collective worship has many outstanding features, not least the rigour with which it is evaluated. The school has been effective in building a vibrant partnership with the local church.

Established strengths

- The strong Christian character of the school demonstrated in supportive relationships
- The care and respect of pupils for each other
- The mutually beneficial partnership with the local church

Focus areas for development

- Develop the use of the spiritual garden for reflection and regular worship
- Enable children to have a deeper understanding of faiths other than Christianity by creating closer links with other communities and through more regular visits to places of worship

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

The distinctive Christian character of this school pervades and nourishes its daily life; it is demonstrated in thought-provoking and interactive displays, through prayer at key times and through sensitive acts of worship. However, it is most striking in the ease and readiness with which children speak of spiritual matters and in the effect it has on their attitudes – they comment that 'we are a Christian school' and that 'this alters the way we think'. Children can also explain that 'Jesus did good things and so we should do good things and follow in his footsteps'. They understand that they belong to a church school and remark that 'the church and the school are very close, they are bonded'. Parents are universally supportive of the school and feel it promotes the whole child and encourages children to consider moral values. Relationships at all levels are excellent and staff feel affirmed. All children, including the most vulnerable, are nurtured in a caring environment, as demonstrated by a class of

children who were keen to enquire after their classmate who had been taken to hospital after an accident. The school's Christian values have an impact on the whole school community, for instance through the recent 'reflection day' during which children, parents and staff could reflect on deep issues such as forgiveness and respond with questions such as 'why can't there be world peace?' The school environment is used sensitively to support its distinctive character through such elements as the reflective prayer station in the hall, the stained glass and also through the newly created spiritual garden, which children are very proud to show to visitors and which they are looking forward to using more frequently. Religious education (RE) contributes significantly to the distinctive character – children begin lessons with 'stilling' to engage their emotions and are mature in their analysis of the parable of the Lost Son, explaining that 'Jesus was trying to teach us how to forgive each other properly.'

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

Collective worship is a focal point for the school day and a central feature of school life. Children look forward to it as a special time and parents comment that their children talk enthusiastically about it at home. Children are respectful and fully engaged, singing confidently and sensitively, and accompanying their singing with actions - 'singing makes you joyful' is typical of their comments. They also contribute to worship times by setting up the hall, playing music on the piano at the start and end and by reading prayers that they have written. They listen well and remember the key points – for example, when explaining that the story of the Lost Sheep is a parable that Jesus told and that it means that 'everyone is special to God'. They understand that a candle is lit 'to represent that God is with us' but also, more deeply, that 'the darker it is, the more the light of God is with us.' It is in this manner that children's thinking is inspired by times of reflection and worship. Children are able to sing the Lord's Prayer by heart using actions. Collective worship is well structured across the school year and includes the major Christian festivals and those of other faiths. Children appreciate the visits to school by church members, including the local curate, whose input is remembered by children – they comment that 'she transforms the hall into a church ceremony'. They explain that during these visits 'the soul of the church comes here' and that 'the people of the church bring the church to life in the school hall.' All this is helping children to relate the spiritual and moral content of worship to their daily school life. In the words of one child, 'we learn about God and it helps to make us better people and to think.' The planning and monitoring of collective worship is exceptionally well developed and the coordinator has introduced a range of inventive evaluation strategies to which staff, parents, governors and children all contribute. As a result of children's suggestions, there are now more opportunities for parents to participate in worship times.

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

The school leaders are successful in creating a church school environment which has a shared sense of purpose and where everyone is valued and encouraged. Leaders know the school well; they are able to articulate its strengths and achievements as well as areas that have potential for development. All those in leadership, including governors, understand what makes the school distinctive, promote its values, and have a clear vision for its future. Foundation governors agree that the school's values impact on children's attitudes and comment that 'everyone is a family.' The school and church leaders collaborate in creating imaginative and mutually beneficial links – children visit the church for key festivals and for special events and parishioners are invited to attend school worship. The close relationship between school and church is illustrated by an exhibition of children's paintings in the church to mark its centenary. These events, along with children's involvement in Women's World Day of Prayer, have a cohesive impact on the community. The pupil voice is strongly promoted and children are encouraged to take on leadership roles, for example through the school council and eco-council and through the harvest fund-raising. School leaders work hard to develop children's wider understanding, through support for charities, visits to places of worship, visitors from other faith traditions and links with schools in Middlesbrough and Kenya. As a result, children readily explain that 'we should respect other religions.' However, school leaders also appreciate that there is more scope for contact with representatives of other faiths and cultures in order to enhance children's understanding of other UK communities.