



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Cranfield VC Lower School
Court Road, Cranfield, Bedford MK43 0DR**

Diocese of St Albans



LA: Central Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 27 September 2010
Previous S23 Inspection: 14 March 2007
URN: 109598
Headteacher: Mrs Anna Rogers
SIAS Inspector Name: The Revd Vanessa Cato
SIAS Inspector No:

School Context

Cranfield VC Lower School is a larger than average lower school with a lower than average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. However, the school caters for a significant number of pupils from different countries who join or leave the school during the school year because their parents are attending the local university. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cranfield VC Lower School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

A strong Christian ethos underpins the life of the school. Core Christian values are reflected in the overall atmosphere of the school, embedded in its curriculum and understood, owned and practised by all stakeholders. The commitment and leadership of the Headteacher, staff and governors and its strong partnership with the church enable the school to be a place where all children have the opportunity and encouragement to flourish.

Established strengths

- Core Christian values which contribute effectively to the whole curriculum and underpin the outstanding quality of pastoral care.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, judged as outstanding by the Ofsted report (June 2010).
- Strong links with the local churches, university and local community which nourish and enhance the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and academic development.
- The commitment, leadership and management skills at all levels.

Focus for development

- Continue to develop the faith and spirituality aspects and resources in the classroom Reflection Areas.
- Increase pupils' understanding and awareness of the wider Anglican Communion and heritage.
- Develop further the process of involving the children in evaluation and decision making.

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

A range of evidence indicates that core Christian values are reflected in the overall atmosphere of the school, in the children's good behaviour, positive attitudes to work, harmonious relationships and respect and appreciation of the wider community, including those of other faiths and none. Pupils, parents and governors are able to articulate the Christian values promoted by the school, and staff believe them to be integral to the curriculum, "not add-ons". The impact that they have on pupils' personal and social development is evidenced in the confidence with which the children discuss the key values in lessons, at play and at home, and naturally use them to help resolve issues in the playground. Parents believe the school meets the needs of all the children, fostering interest, curiosity and respect and giving pupils a solid foundation for making informed choices. The school goes out of its way to be inclusive and children feel comfortable talking about their different faith practices and beliefs. Children are very comfortable with each other and incidences of bullying and racism are rare. Ofsted (2010) notes that "the quality of care, support and guidance for pupils is outstanding", as are the safeguarding procedures in place. Also noted as outstanding is the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Through its strong links with the local church and community, the school helps pupils to develop an understanding of their place in the local community. Ofsted comments that "the school makes excellent use of the diverse background of pupils to develop an awareness of the wider community"(2010). There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and experiences which enrich pupils' development and learning.

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

Collective Worship plays a very important role in the life of Cranfield school, which has enthusiastically grasped the worship development aspects of the last report. Staff, governors, pupils and parents are very positive about the impact of Collective Worship on pupils' everyday lives. This is outstanding. Cranfield school gives pupils many opportunities for active engagement, participation and quiet reflection in worship, which they enjoy and respond to positively. Pupils are regularly involved in the evaluation of worship and in its preparation and execution. This includes an Assembly Club where worship is planned, based on the current or forthcoming Christian value. Opportunities also exist for prayer and reflection during the rest of the school day. RE is frequently taught within a reflective atmosphere and each classroom has its own comfortable and attractive Reflection Area. These are well used and liked by the children. Each classroom has a wooden cross on display, made by the husband of one of the teaching assistants and decorated by the children. Prayer takes place in the classrooms at the end of the day. The school also worships regularly at the local Church. Families are encouraged to attend these acts of worship and some that take place in school. Pupils are familiar with many aspects of Anglican tradition and practice and are taught the Lord's Prayer. The school makes excellent use of clergy, lay people and other resources, including Godly Play and "Open the Book" (an effective, and very popular, ecumenical storytelling group). Children, regardless of religious background or of no faith, are happy to attend school worship. Senior staff have initiated discussions to promote better understanding with parents who withdraw their children from Collective Worship and RE. All staff attend Collective Worship during the week, and are enthusiastic about leading it. Governors meetings begin with prayer, led by different people.

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

Evidence shows that the school's status as a Church school has become central to its ethos, through the excellent leadership of the Headteacher, with strong support from staff and governors, who see and promote the school's Christian character as an integral part of its everyday life. There is strong evidence that "The clear focus and vision provided by the headteacher which has brought about significant improvements" (Ofsted 2010) has had an outstanding impact on the school community itself and enhanced its role in the wider community. There is a strong motivational force for continuing improvement and development, particularly with respect to Cranfield's status as a church school. Good links with the local church also nourish and support the school well. As a result, Cranfield School provides a compassionate, caring and spiritually motivated environment in which to work and grow. The school makes good use of CPD (including diocesan provision) for both staff and governors.