



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report



**Silsoe Church of England VC Lower School  
High Street, Silsoe, Bedford MK45 4ES**

**Diocese of St Albans**

**LA:** Bedfordshire  
**SIAS Inspection:** 25<sup>th</sup> March 2009  
**Previous S23 Inspection:** 27<sup>th</sup> + 29<sup>th</sup> March 2006  
**URN:** 109605  
**Headteacher:** Mrs Susan Purdue  
**SIAS Inspector Name:** Mrs Mel Adams  
**SIAS Inspector No:** 58

### **School Context**

The school is a small one form entry first school with 107 pupils aged 4-9. It has a small unit for specialist educational provision. It is situated in the parish of Silsoe and works in partnership with the parish church of St James. Achievement throughout the school is excellent, and is well above national expectations by the time children leave at the end of Year 4.

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

Silsoe VC Lower School is an outstanding Church of England school in which strong Christian values, which support and challenge the day by day experiences of the school community, are becoming increasingly foundational. This is entirely consistent with the school's expressed vision, the aim of which is that Christian values steer high achievement, and the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of all children in a secure and happy environment.

### **Established strengths**

- The powerful leadership of the Head teacher, in establishing an agreed culture of shared Christian values, and the extent to which this is shared by staff and Governors.
- The contribution of the vicar in supporting the development of the Christian ethos.
- The extent to which children are able to articulate the values and the way in which they understand them to be about their own lives and their responsibility to others.

### **Focus for development**

- To increase further the impact of collective worship by directly involving children in monitoring and evaluation
- To develop further Christian values education by evaluating the impact on spiritual development

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

Children at Silsoe enjoy coming to school, feel secure and achieve very well. They say they want to be kind and want to make people happy when they are sad, supporting each other through the values they learn in assembly. They will also speak to adults if they need help. Behaviour is therefore excellent as children take personal responsibility for themselves and those around them. There is a shared culture of forgiveness in which, as described by the Head teacher, it is possible to say, 'I don't like your behaviour, but I still love you'. Hence Christian values, described also as 'gospel' or 'kingdom' values, permeate the life of the school, and have a profound impact on the day to day lives of the children. Spiritual development is enriched across the curriculum. This was evident in RE, where children were given opportunities to think about their own personal responses, such as Year 2 children discussing whether charity posters communicated their message about poverty effectively, and a child in Year 1 doing a bark rubbing of a cross, 'because the trees are made of wood and Jesus died on the cross'. Values are not only translated into the lives in the school, they are also celebrated on values trees in the assembly hall and classrooms. The ethos statement in the hall clearly identifies the school as a church school, supported by a display stating, 'The more we use our values, the more we grow'. The Head teacher's perception is that values give a practical framework for spiritual development, and it is evident in this school that it is very much the case. Children speak of values they apply to themselves such as love, respect and friendship and summed up by children who wrote, 'values are important to God', and 'they help to teach children that we are a kind and caring school'.

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

Daily collective worship is central to the life of the school and provides a rich setting for spiritual development. It is the setting in which the Christian values are expressed and understood by children and staff, all of whom attend. Assemblies are led by school staff and the Vicar. Participation is excellent, with staff and children sitting together in a quiet and respectful atmosphere, enhanced by a range of music as they enter and leave. Images projected on the screen form a focal point, and the current value is displayed. Children are eager to take part and were observed reading instructions and creating an Easter garden, which drew on their learning in different curriculum areas. This culminated in the creation of three crosses made from sticks, enabling all those present to reflect on how much God loves everyone. The understanding gained is extended into the school day, illustrated by the children who were heard later in the day singing the song from assembly, and commenting that Jesus dying on the cross made them think about love, co-operation and appreciation. Children are affirmed for acting on values in weekly assemblies where they can be awarded a leaf to display on the values tree. Spiritual development is further supported by singing of worship songs appropriate to the theme. An understanding of Anglican tradition is supported through celebration of festivals and marking key events in the church calendar such as Lent, and some prayers and responses are used. Special school services are held in the church, and the Vicar holds a weekly church club in school which is well attended. Evaluations of worship are carried out by the leadership team and governors, but children have yet to be involved in this. Children are able to talk about the influence of values they encounter in assemblies. In Year 4, children were able to say, 'Values are important to God: they help us to be better people and to look after each other'. The impact of the powerfully articulated Christian values was summarised by one child who said that, 'Humility is the most important value because that's what Jesus wants us to do, and if we are humble, we are doing all the other values.'

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

The Head teacher, working in partnership with the Vicar, is passionately committed to Christian values education. Fully supported by the staff and governors, she is strategically steering and guiding the development and improvement of the school as a church school. The vision, articulated in the Ethos statement, is understood by stakeholders, including children who wrote, 'We learn to be kind and patient and God is helping us, our values help us to be a caring school, they make us think about others'. Church school self evaluation is detailed and accurate and has agreed targets for improvement. Feedback from parents and children is taken into account in evaluations. Distributive leadership within the school ensures ongoing developments, ably led by co-ordinators in RE, Collective Worship and Values. The Head teacher and co-ordinators monitor through learning walks in which children's responses to values are recorded. Governors participate well in monitoring and evaluation with an agreed focus for each visit, and these are reported back to the governing body. The church and school work in close partnership, described by parents, staff and governors, this being particularly evident during recent tragedies within the school community, where the school became the focal point for support both spiritually and practically. Staff work closely as a team, fully supporting the vision and ethos, enabled by regular training in values education, including a training day each year. Staffing appointments and induction of both staff and governors fully take into account the church school identity. The commitment to inclusion, based on Christian values that each child is valued in God, has supported the successful integration of a severely disabled child and also the development of the specialist provision unit. One parent wrote 'We like the fact that the school has a strong commitment to emphasising the importance of values such as humility, patience and kindness'.

**SIAS Report 25 March 2009 Silsoe VC Lower School, MK45 4ES**