



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report



Aston St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
School Lane, Aston, Stevenage SG2 7HA

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 28 May & 28 June 2010
Previous S48 Inspection: 15 December 2006
URN: 117421
Headteacher: Philip Gray
SIAS Inspector Name: David Underwood
SIAS Inspector No: 96

School Context

Aston St Mary's Church of England School is a small school serving the village of Aston and the local rural area and admits a number of children from Stevenage. The school is popular and oversubscribed. The vast majority of children are white British and come from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. The Headteacher has recently been appointed to a new post from September 2010.

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

This is because the staff, governors and parents have all worked together to build a school firmly rooted in Christian values which has a positive impact on all its pupils and the local community.

Established strengths

- The school's distinctive Christian character impacts on the life and work of the school and in particular on each individual child.
- Religious Education is well planned and delivered with pupils reaching high standards and making good progress.
- Relationships within the school are outstanding and enrich the development and learning experiences of all pupils.
- The dynamic contribution of the Headteacher has welded together a highly effective staff team whose prime concern is the care and love for each individual pupil and this is reflected in both policies and practice.

Focus for development

- Pupils should take a greater role in the planning and leadership of Collective Worship.
- Further develop pupils' understanding of their role in local, national and global communities.

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

Throughout the school, displays, photographs, and pupils' work taken together with the positive comments from all stakeholders attest to the way in which the school's distinctive Christian character impacts on its life and work and in particular on each individual pupil. For example, each child builds up, throughout their time at Aston, a "Learning Journey", a personal journal illustrating their growth and development, and recording successes and highlights of their school life. The school operates in harmony and relationships are outstanding making a significant contribution to pupils' attitudes, cooperation and positive behaviour. Attention is paid to detail within the school environment, which cumulatively adds to the social, moral and spiritual development of pupils. In particular the re-roofing of the school hall has created a space which is now more conducive to worship, and the gathering of the school community than was previously possible. Links with other schools in the developing world, local and national charities, are having an impact on pupils understanding of their role in local, national and global communities but could be further developed.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good.

Since the last inspection the school has undertaken significant work to improve and enrich Collective Worship and this has increased the impact on pupils. It is seen by staff and pupils alike as a core activity in the day and its effects ripple through the life of the school. Pupils frequently participate and are always fully engaged with the worship but there remains more scope for pupils to take planning and leadership roles. In the Act of Worship inspected the pupils sat in family groups of their choice and this added to the encouragement and support they derived from the "Success Assembly." A beautiful altar table has been especially constructed for the school and illustrates the care and attention that is given to worship. Pupils feel affirmed and supported, and are given the opportunity to pray and reflect. Collective Worship is well planned and some evaluation takes place although this is mainly undertaken by the Headteacher.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is outstanding.

The school has successfully addressed the issues raised by the last inspection and now pupils are making above average progress across each key stage. The lessons inspected were either outstanding or good and supported the evidence that R.E. is well planned and delivered, using a wide range of learning strategies. Pupils of all abilities are thoroughly engaged and show a high level of attainment. In one lesson pupils were encouraged to give and receive positive comments about themselves and others. This had a great impact and contributed to the social and spiritual development of the pupils. The organisation of lessons allows pupils to reflect on their own beliefs, to share their views and listen attentively to the ideas of others. This confidence and openness, has developed respect and contributes to social cohesion. The marking of pupils' work is consistent, encouraging and supportive; the work itself being of a high standard and well presented. Clear and effective assessment is regularly undertaken, with the pupils themselves completing "I can" statements, this in turn informs future planning and differentiation.

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

Since the last inspection the Headteacher and Governors have honed their vision of the school, and plans and aspirations present at the time of the last inspection have been brought to fruition. The school is now firmly rooted in Christian values which enrich relationships, attitudes and behaviour in all aspects of school life. The relationships within the school are outstanding and are evident at all levels. The dynamic contribution of the Headteacher has welded together a highly effective staff team whose prime concern is the care and love for each individual pupil and this is reflected in both policies and practice. The Governors and other stakeholders have a genuine and accurate understanding of the school and this self knowledge contributes to the development and improvement of practice. The establishment of a Parent Council in addition to the Governing Body further ensures that the views of all stakeholders are both heard and addressed. Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school, its ethos and the education it provides. As the Headteacher prepares to move to a new post the Governing Body and staff are working to ensure a smooth succession with the retention of existing values and principles, and yet an openness to change. There is beneficial support between the school and the local church with the present incumbent making a significant contribution to the life and worship of the school community.