



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Peter's Church of England (VA) Primary School
Church Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 8HD

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	Monday, 29 March 2010
Previous S48 Inspection:	01 October 2007
URN:	117448
Headteacher:	Philippa Golding
SIAS Inspector Name:	Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No:	484

School Context

St Peter's is an average sized primary school situated in a residential area of Rickmansworth. It is set in pleasant grounds and provides easy access to the nearby church, via a short path and gate. Pupils generally come from backgrounds that are socially and economically favourable and attainment on entry is above average. The recent loss of the vicar has provided significant challenge for the school at the present time.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are good.

This is because Christian values lie at the heart of the school's day-to-day activities, encouraging all who work and play here to support one another and to live out their daily lives by example. Good progress has been made in all areas for development identified in the previous Section 48 inspection report, which has resulted in improvements in the promotion of the school's Christian ethos and in the quality and impact of Religious Education (RE). The challenge presented by the recent departure of the vicar is being met with great thought and sensitivity and it is particularly gratifying to see how effectively the school and church are pulling together at this difficult time.

Established strengths

- The promotion of clear Christian values, which supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well;
- The strong commitment of the headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors, to the continued development of the school's Christian distinctiveness;
- The good quality acts of worship which impact positively on pupils' spiritual development;
- The good provision for RE, which allows pupils to attain good standards through a creative and practical curriculum;

Focus for development

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship;
- Use assessment information to plan next steps in learning, to ensure that all groups of pupils make the best possible progress and develop a clear understanding of their own next steps;
- Provide opportunities for governors and other stakeholders to play a full part in self evaluation of the school as a church school.

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

This is because strong Christian values lie at the heart of the school's day to day work and these are modelled effectively by both adults and pupils. These values underpin the school's ethos and in particular make a tangible contribution to the outstanding provision for care, guidance and support. This is evident in responses from parents, with comments such as "...it has a good family atmosphere where children are seen as unique individuals" and "...children accept Christian values and behaviours as an everyday 'normal' part of their lives" being typical. As a result of this and of the improved opportunities for spiritual reflection since the last inspection, pupils have many opportunities to relate Christian teaching to their everyday lives and are encouraged to grow into responsible and caring citizens. Through such initiatives as the *Bujagali Trust*, pupils have significant opportunity to develop an understanding of the lives and needs of others in a realistic and effective way. Relationships are good at all levels throughout the school, resulting in a strong family feel which radiates warmth. Visitors feel very welcome and this support extends to pupils helping each other, through such initiatives as playground buddies and the school council. As a result, the school is inclusive and holds the needs of all pupils at the heart of its philosophy. Very good use is made of the grounds and displays to promote spiritual reflection and thought and good use has been made of support from the Diocese to ensure that the school reflects its Christian character effectively.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils enjoy worship and take an active part through prayer, responses and song. Acts of worship are well planned and good records are kept, although the school does not currently make formal evaluations of their quality and impact. Worship is well matched to the age and ability of pupils and because pupils engage effectively in worship, the values discussed have a strong impact on their everyday lives. Ideas considered in worship are often discussed later in class, as seen during the inspection when the theme of 'sacrifice' was referred to in a year 6 RE lesson. While pupils engage actively in worship, opportunities for them to plan and lead worship are currently limited. Good use is made of prayer and quiet reflection to promote spiritual development, contrasting well with pupils' enthusiastic commitment to singing a range of hymns and songs, some of which are firmly rooted in the Anglican liturgy. The use of the school prayer and the lighting of a candle provide a clear signal that worship is a special time in the school day. Good use is made of the Church for worship and the whole school visits on key dates in the year, enabling pupils to develop a good understanding of the main dates and festivals in the Christian year.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The moving performance of one year 4 pupil as Mary Magdalene in the year 3 and 4 Easter play 'Good News' illustrates well the school's commitment to ensuring that pupils engage in a range of practical and creative experiences while developing a good understanding of the Christian faith. This has been a very positive development since the last inspection and as a result pupils enjoy RE, reaching standards that are above average. This is supported by the consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching they receive; for example, the outstanding lesson seen in the reception class during the inspection, which encouraged pupils, through well-planned activities and experiences, to gain a deeper understanding of the events of Palm Sunday. Comments such as "Jesus is special, because he makes all the world and all of us" illustrate the opportunities for reflection given during the lesson and the quality of young children's responses. Activities are often challenging and thought provoking – for example an activity encouraging year 6 pupils to re-tell a religious story using symbolism and investigating Christ's life and character through the use of metaphor. Assessment in RE has developed well since the last inspection and staff are now better able to quantify attainment and progress; however, full use is not yet made of this information to plan next steps in learning for all groups of pupils. RE contributes well to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils have an appropriate understanding of a range of major world religions. RE contributes well to community cohesion, particularly through the *Bujagali Trust* and the emerging links with a large multi-cultural primary school in London.

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

This is because school leaders, staff and governors are effective in promoting the key Christian values that lie at the heart of the school as a community. The headteacher has played a particularly effective role in promoting a strong Christian ethos which is an integral part of the every day life of St Peter's. As a result the school is an effective Christian community and the overwhelming majority of parents are clear that it is a good church school. Governors have engaged positively in the strategic development of the school as a church school since the last inspection and this is reflected strongly in the school development plan under a section entitled "Spirituality and Faith". However, while a full self-evaluation of this aspect of the school's work has been carried out, governors and other stakeholders have not yet been fully engaged in this process. The school has very effective links with the local community and the partnership with the church remains strong, in spite of the recent sudden departure of the vicar. The developing links with other clergy and willing parishioners are proving to be very supportive at this difficult time.