



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Diocese of St Albans



Christ Church C of E (VA) Primary School and Nursery
New Road, Ware SG12 7BT

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 2nd March 2010
Previous SIAS Inspection: 14th May 2007
URN: 117473
Headteacher: Mrs Ania Vaughan
SIAS Inspector: Lindsay Fraser
Inspector Number: 107

School context

Christ Church C of E Primary School and Nursery is a larger than average school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although the number of pupils with statements of educational needs is below average. Pupils come from a wide range of socio economic backgrounds.

Summary Judgement

Christ Church is a good Church school. It has a strong Christian foundation in which the Christian vision for the school of the local Church, the Governing Body and the Acting Headteacher underpins the whole ethos and fabric of the school.

Established strengths

- The impact of the Acting Headteacher whose drive has enabled the school to build on and develop its Christian character.
- The excellent contribution and input of the local Church and clergy in developing the children's understanding of the Christian faith and practice whilst developing the spiritual life of the school.
- The support of the school staff in promoting and engaging in the Christian vision and development of spirituality.
- A clear understanding of what has been achieved as a Church school and the next steps.

Focus for development

- Re-establish Values Education through staff development and monitor its impact.
- Evaluate the extent to which Collective Worship impacts upon pupils' understanding and relationships.
- Develop an assessment system in Religious Education which enables teachers and children to have a clearer understanding of standards and progress.

The school is good in meeting the needs of all learners through its distinctive Christian ethos.

This is because of the welcoming environment which clearly promotes the Christian identity of the school, both in public areas and in the classrooms, where there is an explicit area for celebrating Christianity. This is an innovation since the previous inspection and the next step identified is to consider the ways and appropriate times to develop the use of prayer in the classroom with the help of the local church. Pupils appreciate the recent emphasis on improving behaviour and value the strategies which have been implemented, especially the reward systems which are now in place. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is good and is well developed through all areas of the curriculum. The emphasis on spirituality has enabled pupils to express their feelings openly, confidently and with sensitivity. Plans are in place to further develop Values Education. Parents value the strong links with the church. Parents of Reception children speak enthusiastically of the welcome service for new children and parents, led by the headteacher, clergy and older pupils. The gift of Bible stories for children and a fridge magnet text for parents were also significant symbols of the Christian welcome. Relationships between members of staff are very supportive, providing good role models for the pupils.

The impact of Collective Worship on learners is good.

Collective Worship is good because of the quality of provision, the strong support given by the local vicar and other members of the Church, their presence in the school and the very close links with the church. Planning for Collective Worship is thorough and takes account of Diocesan planning, the Church calendar and the current values. Pupils particularly appreciate the input from their visitors and the fact that the Vicar 'makes them think'. The sharing of good practice for those leading worship would further enhance the impact of worship on the pupils. The staff have been involved in evaluating the provision of Collective Worship, but a system of evaluating the extent to which pupils derive inspiration and understanding from Collective Worship is yet to be established. Collective Worship always involves a time for reflection and pupils speak of the importance of having their prayers included in the closing prayers by the leaders of Collective Worship. Pupils and their parents value the termly Class Assemblies which are organised and led by the pupils to celebrate examples of their learning, together with the inclusion of their own prayers. Parents are invited to attend Acts of Worship every week and speak enthusiastically of the opportunity to give their instant feedback on Class Assemblies through an interactive voting system.

The impact of Religious Education on learners is good.

The current subject leader has built on the work of the previous subject leader and has introduced a cohesive system of planning, having worked closely with Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education. Achievement in RE is in line with achievement in other subjects and national expectations, although assessment is more anecdotal than rigorous. It is not always clear what progress has been made by groups of pupils. This is an area which has been identified as the next area for development. 'Learning about Religion' is as yet more clearly demonstrated than 'Learning from Religion'. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the range and quality of writing to reflect pupils' understanding. Pupils enjoy wide ranging and engaging activities and particularly enjoy the opportunities to develop what they have learned in Religious Education in cross curricular topics. Pupils derive inspiration and confidence through the discussion of serious questions and relating these to their own lives. For example a KS2 class, who were discussing Jesus as the Light of the World, felt that there was more darkness in the world nowadays, but also felt that Jesus was there to be a source of comfort and confidence. They were also able to see that there were other interests in life which could detract from time given to reflection and prayer. A Year 2 class confidently wrote their own prayers in response to a visual image, followed by a sensitive sharing of their prayers. The Church Link Associate Governor leads timetabled lessons which extend pupils' understanding of a range of Religious Education concepts. For example pupils in Years 5 and 6 have looked at the concept of sacrifice and remembrance, linking this with the memorials inside and outside the Church.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school are good.

This is because the headteacher, governors and leaders have a clear understanding of the distinctiveness of the school as a Church school and support the development of its Christian character. A more thorough approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of Collective Worship and Religious Education will enhance this further. The strong relationship with the local Church is well respected by the parents and the staff. The Church provides a holiday club for the pupils from the school during the school holiday which is always over-subscribed. The staff are well supported by the Governing Body who, at the beginning of the year, provide an opportunity for the staff to share with them in the celebration of the Eucharist and in an informal social event. The Governing Body and senior management are very supportive of the development of leadership throughout the school and in enabling staff to take responsibility for Christian leadership through staff development, such as the use of prayer in the classroom. The school has a good understanding of its local community, but the location of the school makes multi-cultural links more challenging. Pupils are always keen to support those nationally and internationally who are in need and recently raised a considerable amount of money for the Haiti appeal.