



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report
St Catherine's Church of England (VC) Primary School
Park Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0AW



Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: Monday, 24 May 2010
Previous S48 Inspection: 02 November 2006
URN: 117410
Headteacher: Kim Hall
SIAS Inspector Name: Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No: 484

School Context

St Catherine's is a smaller than average primary school set in pleasant grounds in the market town of Ware, adjacent to the nearby secondary school. It benefits from very spacious buildings and bright, airy classrooms. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The headteacher has been in post for just over a year, following a period of significant change and development for the school. A Surestart Children's Centre has recently been established at the school and building work is currently being undertaken to provide accommodation for the centre.

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

This is because there is a strong shared commitment to the Christian values that underpin the school's day to day work. There is a shared vision, reflected in the school's motto "*We are Achieving, Caring, Enjoying (ACE!)*", which encapsulates the commitment to teamwork and inclusion that is so evident within the school. There has been significant improvement in all areas for development noted in the Previous Section 48 inspection report, reflecting the clear commitment of school leaders to the development of the school as a church school.

Established strengths

- Good relationships at all levels, underpinned by strong Christian values;
- The commitment of the headteacher and staff to the development of the school as a church school;
- The good quality acts of worship, which nourish and support children's spiritual development;
- The clear commitment to inclusion, which reflects the school's drive to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

Focus for development

- Develop opportunities for pupils to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures and faiths;
- Introduce formal systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of collective worship;
- Develop a strategic plan for the future development of the school as a church school, reflecting areas for development identified through self-evaluation.

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

This is because Christian values lie at the heart of the everyday life of the school and this is evident in discussion with pupils, staff and governors. Pupils can articulate the school's key values and link these to the development of good citizenship. As one pupil put it: *"Our school values help us to behave well"*. These values have an important impact on pupils' lives, enabling them to support one another and to model good relationships as they go about their daily activities. In discussion, pupils were adamant that the best thing about St Catherine's is that *"everyone helps one another"* and this enables all pupils to feel special and valued. It also reflects the strong focus on inclusion that is evident within the school, striving to secure the best for all pupils, whatever their talents or background. As a result, the school's distinctive Christian character supports pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well. The strong commitment to teamwork and tangible sense of belonging are reflected in relationships that are good at all levels. Pupils are clear that, when things do go wrong, the key to rebuilding relationships lies in forgiveness and that mutual support is an important part of their commitment to each other. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development have improved significantly since the last section 48 report and many opportunities were seen during the inspection for quiet reflection. A good example of this is provided by the reflective areas in each classroom. These provide a genuine opportunity for pupils to take a step back and reflect on their daily lives, supported by well chosen display materials. As a result, they are clear about the nourishment that this provides for their spiritual development, reflected in such comments as *"The reflection areas give us support"*. While opportunities are provided through the curriculum for pupils to develop an understanding of other faiths and cultures, this is not as well developed as it could be. The school environment has developed very effectively since the last SIAS report and this now reflects the school's Christian character well. Displays are bright and colourful and often provide opportunity for reflection on religious and social themes. Symbols of the Christian religion are used effectively and no one can be in any doubt that St Catherine's is a Church of England school.

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

The commitment to providing good quality acts of worship has ensured very good development in this area since the previous inspection. Provision is now good overall and the hall provides a warm and conducive space for worship. The use of the cross, the Lord's Prayer and displays which reflect a range of world religions support this well. At the heart of improvements is the good quality planning of daily acts of worship and the commitment of all staff to sharing in this. Pupils enjoy worship because of the many opportunities they have to be actively involved. In the high quality act of worship observed during the inspection pupils were encouraged to respond to challenging questions and relate the theme to their prior learning; there were opportunities for discussion and to report back to the whole school on their thoughts and feelings. Song and prayer also played important roles, as did opportunities for quiet reflection. Towards the end of worship, pupils were encouraged to write their thoughts on the theme of "Trust" and these were used throughout the day as part of a display in the main corridor, thereby enabling worship to continue throughout the day. Pupils are also encouraged to play a key role in the termly church services, which they plan and lead with the help of their teachers. These have proved particularly effective and have encouraged improved attendance by parents. While it is clear that pupils enjoy worship and that it supports their spiritual development well, the school does not yet have systems in place for monitoring the quality and impact of worship on a systematic basis. There are well established links with the church and the vicar leads worship regularly in school.

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

This is because school leaders have reflected regularly on the implications of being a church school since the last inspection, enabling the developments in promoting the school's Christian character and securing improvements in worship that have been outlined earlier in this report. Clear evidence of the school's Christian ethos is now present in all school documents and its mission statement sets the school's Christian foundation at the heart of its ethos. As a result, all stakeholders are clear about the Christian values that the school promotes and the importance they hold in the lives of pupils, their families and staff. This is reflected in the very positive views that parents hold about the school, encouraging one parent to write *"The school has a very caring ethos and teaches the pupils to look after one another"*. The school has completed an accurate and thoughtful self-evaluation of its church school aspects since the last inspection and this is reflected in the good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. However, this has not yet been translated into a strategic plan for the future development of the school specifically as a *church school* and school leaders are clear that this is now the next step in its development. The school has strong links with the local church and community and many opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in charitable giving and to consider the lives of those less fortunate than they are.