



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Diocese of St Albans



St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
The Green, Totteridge, London N20 8NX

LEA: Barnet
SIAS Inspection : 8th June 2009
Previous S23 Inspection: May 2005
URN: 101327
Headteacher: Helen Lockham
SIAS Inspector: Lyn Field
Inspector No: NS 151

Context

This is a popular school of average size. Pupils generally come from favourable social and economic backgrounds with more than half from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups. Most of these pupils speak English as an additional language with 33 different languages being spoken in the school and many faiths represented. The headteacher has been in post for just a year after a long period without a substantive head.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's as a Church of England school are satisfactory.

Pupils clearly benefit from the school's inclusive nature and the open and trusting manner in which faith is valued and discussed. They develop positive attitudes to diversity and a mature ability to empathise with the feelings of others. The new headteacher is giving the school renewed direction as a church school and this is enabling the whole community to consider the implications of Christian values for the life of the school.

Established strengths

- The genuine interest and respect pupils show for the faith of all families in the school
- The clear vision of the headteacher for the Christian ethos of the school
- The well established links with the church

Focus for development

- To introduce a new syllabus for religious education that incorporates a system for assessment. It should be linked to the broader curriculum and focus on developing pupils' skills of enquiry.
- To identify the opportunities for spiritual development across all curriculum areas and monitor the use pupils make of them.

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

It is clear that parents and pupils of all faiths feel fully included in the life of the school. Pupils show a genuine interest in how belief affects the way that people live their lives because they learn at first hand from their friends in school. They recognise the value of this experience and explain how it prepares them for life in a multi-cultural society. Parents support this view. They like the strong moral framework in which pupils learn and the attention given to different faiths that enables them to develop a broad perspective on life. The Christian values of respect, forgiveness and trust figure highly in the pupils' list of those that shape school life and so behaviour is good and they show concern for each other. Their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage pupils to reflect on their feelings and discuss the deeper issues in life that arise from lessons. This begins in Reception where, for example, they are keen to talk about what emerged from the cocoons in the classroom. By the time they leave the school, pupils are able to make mature contributions to discussion of ethical issues. The school has yet to monitor these opportunities for spiritual development so it is not clear where it needs to build on its current strengths to ensure there is consistency across the school. The vibrant display in the entrance hall always explores an aspect of the school's Christian distinctiveness. All classes contribute each term so pupils develop an understanding of key Christian beliefs and festivals and are proud of their school as a church school.

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

The pattern of daily worship in the school is well established and valued by parents. The new headteacher has raised the profile of this so that the distinctive element of worship within assemblies is clear. Some changes made a difference immediately but others are not sufficiently well embedded to assess their impact. Pupils are aware of the changes that have been made. They like the introduction of a candle and enjoy the times of prayer and quiet reflection. They describe these as the 'holy part of assembly' and use them to think about people that are in need of their prayers. Worship therefore has a greater impact on pupils' spiritual development and is beginning to deepen their understanding of simple rituals and symbolism. Expectations for how they should behave are now clear and the atmosphere is improving although there is still work to be done in how pupils prepare for worship by the way that they come into the hall. The range of worship songs has broadened and firm favourites are emerging. Feedback about worship in the school is very positive but the school has yet to monitor responses to specific changes in order to decide what the next steps might be. Pupils of all faith backgrounds feel comfortable to be part of worship. They willingly take part, especially in class assemblies, and this creates a strong sense of community. The school now visits the church more regularly to celebrate key Christian festivals and these are well supported by parents of all faiths. The 'New Starters' service, led by Year 6 pupils for the first time this year, has proved very popular and is one of the ways that significant moments in the life of the community are recognised in worship.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is satisfactory.

The school judges the standards that pupils currently attain in RE to be satisfactory although it recognises that this may represent some underachievement. This is a generally accurate view but it does not take into account the good progress made by some older pupils as a result of stimulating teaching. This is because it is too early for the new co-ordinator to have carried out any lesson observations and the school does not have a programme of assessment in place. There is however, a good understanding of where changes are needed as a priority and an enthusiasm to make improvements quickly. Work has already started on the development of a new syllabus. Pupils feel RE is an important subject because, for example, understanding the content of sacred books helps them understand how people make big decisions in their lives. They are very conscious of the richness that children of different faiths bring to lessons. Pupils make more progress when activities challenge them to be reflective and apply what they have learned in different situations. Year 6 pupils, for example, were able to pose the most perceptive and insightful questions in a 'hot-seating' exercise where they interviewed Peter, Jesus' disciple. The responses of the pupils playing Peter were equally impressive and, together with the Easter diaries they had kept, demonstrated the deep spiritual awareness that had developed in the class. The quality of this work is not consistent across the school. Tasks sometimes do not demand enough of pupils and too much emphasis is placed on factual knowledge and writing accounts of stories as a means of consolidating knowledge.

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

In the period without a substantive head, the acting headteacher provided stable leadership and strengthened links with the church. The new headteacher has brought a much needed strategic approach to the school's development as a church school. The need to raise standards has been the focus of recent changes. Nevertheless the headteacher has ensured that Christian values have played a part in the decisions made, particularly the appointment of new staff. The diocesan adviser and a mentor headteacher from a local church school have provided critical guidance in the school's renewed direction. The vicar continues to be a source of spiritual support and contributes to lessons and acts of worship so that the links with the church are visible and valued by the whole community. The governing body has played a limited role in evaluating the impact of the school's Christian ethos but this is changing. A parent governor has recently taken on the role of link RE governor and already has a good grasp of the current strengths and the issues to be addressed.

The school faces longstanding issues with its outdoor accommodation. The governors are working hard to resolve these but they continue to place significant constraints on the delivery of the curriculum. The staff put considerable effort into ensuring the impact on pupils is minimal.