



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Andrew's Church of England VC Lower School
Brunts Lane, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 0LY

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: Friday 18 January 2008
Previous S23 Inspection: 20 May and 07 June 2005
URN: 109595
Headteacher: Mrs Sue Rolfe
SIAS Inspector Name: Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No: 484

School Context

St Andrew's is a larger than average lower school, set in pleasant grounds on the outskirts of the large town of Biggleswade. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and most are of White British heritage. The school benefits from well-maintained buildings and the large, bright classrooms provide a supportive environment for learning. There is an above average number of pupils with statements of special educational need because the school has a unit for pupils with speech and language difficulties on site.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's Church of England VC Lower School as a Church of England school are good

St Andrew's is a good Church school with many strengths. It promotes its Christian character well and relationships within the school are good at all levels. The strong emphasis on teamwork and developing independence encourages all pupils to strive to achieve and give of their best. Pupils are well supported and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions from an early age. The school's Values Education programme plays a central part in encouraging all pupils to take responsibility for their actions and in developing positive relationships with those around them. Links with the Church and local community are good.

Established strengths

- The outstanding impact of the school's Values Education programme on the relationships within the school
- The good quality and varied acts of worship
- The good relationships at all levels
- The strong leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders in promoting the school's Christian ethos

Focus for development

- Develop formal procedures for using the views of pupils in evaluating the impact of acts of collective worship
- Develop regular and consistent procedures at senior management and governor level to evaluate the quality 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 pupils feel valued and special and they enjoy coming to school. All subscribe to the school's motto of *"Aspire, Believe, Celebrate"* and strive to promote these in their everyday lives within school. Strong Christian values, underpinned by the school's Values Education programme, play a key role in promoting mutual respect and in helping to create a positive atmosphere in which to work and play. This is recognised by parents, moving one to write *"The school offers an inclusive, caring ethos, with clearly communicated, consistent values"*. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their feelings and are provided with a strong moral framework in which to grow. As a result, their moral, spiritual, social and cultural education is good and levels of self esteem and maturity are high. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and to support those around them and the School Council and *Playground Friends* scheme are particularly effective vehicles for this. Relationships are good at all levels, with a strong emphasis on teamwork, and good behaviour is underpinned by a clear behaviour policy which is understood by all. Opportunities for spiritual reflection have been developed well since the last inspection and there are now many opportunities throughout the day for quiet thought, supported by thought-provoking displays. The recent new building has further enhanced the accommodation and displays in classrooms and the hall are used well to supplement the themes and values which are being followed in collective worship. Signs and symbols of the Christian religion are visible throughout the school and its Christian foundation is celebrated in all the school's major publications.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school and the three acts of worship observed during the inspection were all of high quality. Acts of worship are stimulating and well-planned, underpinned by the Values Education programme, designed to develop and deepen moral and spiritual understanding. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy worship, are knowledgeable about a range of Bible stories and Christian festivals and are able to relate these to their everyday lives. The school maintains good records of acts of worship and has undertaken some evaluation of their quality; however, this is not yet sufficiently rigorous and no evaluation of the impact of acts of worship has been undertaken. The school is aware of this and has begun to consider how to consult the views of pupils as a means of judging impact. Pupils participate actively in worship and behaviour is exemplary, within an atmosphere of calm and respect. Good use is made of prayer and reflection and pupils are encouraged to lead prayers, expressing their own feelings and thoughts. This adds spontaneity to worship and provides further opportunity for active participation by pupils. Pupils know and use the Lord's Prayer and sing a range of hymns and songs with enthusiasm. There are strong links with the local Anglican clergy, and those of other denominations, who lead worship on a regular basis and good use is made of the local Church for both worship and as a learning resource. A wide range of staff and visitors are invited and encouraged to lead worship, enhancing greatly the variety and quality of the experience for all pupils.

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

This is because the school's Christian vision is clearly stated and communicated regularly to all. All parents and pupils are aware that St Andrew's is a Church school and older pupils are able to articulate what that means for them. The headteacher and her senior staff play an active role in promoting the Christian vision, ensuring that it holds a central place in the life of the school. The staff and governors have undertaken an initial evaluation of the school's effectiveness as a Church school and have correctly identified strengths and areas for development. However, such evaluation is not yet applied regularly and consistently and governors and senior leaders have recognised the need to formalise this. The views of stakeholders are sought regularly and a wide range of interest groups were involved in recent discussions relating to the school's mission statement, a vision encapsulated in its motto, which is shared by all who work and play here. Good use has been made of opportunities for training and development provided by the diocese and the school recognises that this will need to be continued, particularly with the arrival of new staff this year. The school is inclusive in its work and induction procedures for new staff and pupils are good. Links with the local Church are strong, as are links with the community and other local faith groups. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in a range of charitable giving and have a keen understanding of the needs of others.