

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Andrew's C of E Voluntary Controlled Lower School

Brunts Lane  
Biggleswade  
SG18 0LY

#### Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Central Bedfordshire  
Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> July 2011  
Date of last inspection: January 2008  
School's unique reference number: 109595  
Headteacher: Sue Rolfe  
Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

#### School context

St Andrew's is a larger than average lower school with a large majority of pupils of White British heritage. Although the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities is average, the proportion with statements of educational needs is higher because the school has a resource for pupils with speech and language needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has gained a number of national awards, including the Activemark, Artsmark, Healthy School status and Every Child Matters standard.

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

The ongoing development of the many strengths of St Andrew's, driven by a committed team of staff and governors and underpinned by the mission statement, results in a school that lives out its Christian distinctiveness. Pupils develop core values within a Christian context that enable them to make good relationships with others. They also develop responsibility and the skills for making secure moral and spiritual decisions to guide their future lives.

#### Established strengths

- The commitment of the head, staff and governors to the identification of ongoing development of the Christian character of the school
- The range and quality of acts of worship and links to values and RE
- The impact of ethos on the personal and moral development of the whole school community

#### Focus for development

- Complete a review of the Values programme by staff and governors in order to make the Christian basis for values even more explicit in the policy and practice of the school

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

The inclusive welcoming ethos reflects the school's mission statement 'aspire, believe, celebrate'. Values Education has a high profile that enables everyone to understand the impact of these on the policy and practice of the school within a Christian context. The importance of religious education (RE) and quality of teaching develops this further. Children recognise the links between school values worship, RE and the teachings of Jesus. These are well underpinned by stilling and opportunities for reflection. The excellent relationships between everyone in school are a result of mutual trust and respect for each other. High expectations by adults for the achievement of pupils are founded on effective challenge and support for all pupils. These enable them to develop academically and personally as mature and articulate children with a secure foundation to make spiritual and moral decisions. Pupils are very aware of the values of forgiveness and fresh start in a caring and loving environment. Many have well developed language skills that for example, enable them to describe the value of unity as 'collective strength and harmony'. Throughout the school day pupils are well behaved, with a sense of fun and enjoyment in sharing their learning. They use opportunities for reflection in class and in worship to explore and share their responses to 'big questions'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because of the rich curriculum that includes 'country days' as suggested by pupils and half-termly fun days when different ages groups work together. Displays, many of them interactive posters and symbols reflect the Christian character of the school. Involvement in the 'Art in Heaven' project allows pupils to explore and express spiritual ideas. An example of the depth of their thinking is the comment from a five year old 'I chose a diamond shape to show the open arms of Jesus'. Support for a range of charities enables pupils to support and understand their role within a local, national and global context.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

Worship is a key part of the school day to explore Values Education and themes from the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, within in a Christian context. A comprehensive policy with guidelines for delivery informs well-planned acts of worship by all members of staff. A range of visitors from other Christian churches give pupils a sense of belonging to a wider worshipping community as well as an awareness of the variety of Christian celebration. Practical considerations of space and numbers of pupils limit whole school worship to twice each term. This includes a Pentecost Day for pupils to share special assemblies and class work. Other whole school celebrations are held in church, including St Andrew's Day as well as a welcome service for pupils as they join the school. However, children enjoy a range of key stage and class worship enabling them to link values to Bible stories and their own experiences. Further discussion of themes takes place in circle time and Personal Social and Health education (PSHE) for pupils to understand and reflect on the impact of worship on their lives. Pupils create a reverent atmosphere and have a sense of anticipation for worship. They make a range of contributions, including signing songs that reinforce the language friendly nature of the school. Class worship enables themes to be explored at a more age appropriate level. For example, different year groups use Jesus' stories of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son to show God's love with a return to Him. In the spring term children plan and lead worship to which parents are invited. Pupils explain the lighting of a candle at the beginning of worship as 'it shows that Jesus is the light of the world.' Prayer has a high profile in the daily life of the school, with a prayer area and boxes in every classroom. Children confidently offer spontaneous prayers as part of worship, understanding that 'prayer is a time to talk to God.' The vicar is developing his role and links with the school, leading worship with themes following the church calendar. The church is also used for education purposes such as a role-play wedding. A holiday club organised by church is well attended by pupils.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision, jointly created with staff and governors, that ensures the fulfilment of the mission statement within a Christian context. This is reviewed on an annual basis. As a result all adults in school are role models of teamwork and support that pupils mirror. Foundation governors are active in the life of the school maintaining links with church and ensuring the continuity of the strong ethos. Regular visits to acts of worship inform review and self-assessment ensuring that 'pupils know how to make the right decision within a Christian context. Having the ethos of the school as a standing agenda item, in addition to diocesan training results in the governing body being very aware of the distinctive Christian character of the school. They are also very aware that Christian values form the basis for the core values of other faiths. Although staff and governors are involved in strategic planning and evaluation, the school has recognised the benefits of a training day to jointly identify aspects of the School Development Plan. The inclusion of RE and worship as part of the development plan maintains the profile of the Christian character of the school. The secondment of the deputy to the headship of another school has raised the profile of succession planning by the governing body. Parents praise the work of the school in developing the impact of values and self-confidence on their children. A typical comment from them is 'staff know the children and their families really well and make sure they have a proper Christian nurturing.' They support the work of the school through fundraising by a very active Parents' association. The school has strong links with other local schools, developing and sharing a common approach to an ethos for learning from 3-19.