



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School
St Mary's Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6HY**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 23 January 2007
Previous S23 Inspection: November 2000
URN: 117384
Headteacher: Mrs Val Morris
SIAS Inspector Name: Ms Chris Westgarth
SIAS Inspector No: 44

School Context

St Mary's Infant School is situated on the outskirts of the market town of Baldock. There are 147 on roll and the majority of pupils are white British. There is a wide range of abilities including an above average proportion of children with special needs. All are very well supported by the school.

In 2005 the school was accredited with the Healthy Schools Award and there is a successful Breakfast club. The sudden death of the foundation stage coordinator in 2006 had a profound effect on both the school and wider community. In spite of this, the school staff and Governors continue to work as a strong team, maintaining a happy, safe learning environment for the children.

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The overall distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's Infant School as a Church of England School is good, with many outstanding features. Christian values underpin its work and the experiences provided for the pupils. Each child is viewed as being special and encouraged to grow in respect and responsibility, surrounded with love.

Established strengths

- The schools care for all individuals which is underpinned by Christian values
- The positive, strong link with the church and the role of the clergy
- The strong impact of collective worship

Focus for development

- Continue to develop the distinctive Church of England ethos
- Use the Christian character to enhance and challenge further the SMSC development of learners

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

The school mission statement 'Sharing, caring, learning and loving with God', a result of extensive, inclusive consultation, clearly reflects the aims and goals of the school. There is an atmosphere and ethos of love, care, support and regarding each person as an individual and therefore unique. The behaviour of the children is outstanding. Children are polite and welcoming. The children report that they feel safe and secure and as a result there are good levels of self-esteem. The delightful grounds, the secret/quiet garden and the wildlife meadow are an obvious asset to the school. The whole school environment is clean, tidy and well cared for, thus reinforcing the Christian ethos of care and respect for the surroundings and the world we live in. Lunchtimes are calm and orderly with a wonderful family atmosphere. Positive behaviour strategies, such as the 'top-table' are clearly working and reinforce the exemplary behaviour observed. Charitable involvement, such as Operation Christmas Child, is strong. Opportunities for the voice of learners to be heard are many through 'Talk time'. Children talk positively about the Buddy Bus stop, 'because everyone needs a friend'. Christian values are evident in class displays and pupils are able to explain about saying sorry and forgiveness. The innovative use of the large display in the hall, which grows with the theme of collective worship, is outstanding and to be commended as it forms an inspiring visual backdrop.

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

Learners speak enthusiastically about Collective Worship and their involvement. They regard it as something they share in, rather than something that is done to them. Worship is well planned, the monitoring is effective and there are many outstanding features. The worship time is meaningful for most and the Collective worship plan is closely linked to the church year. There are high levels of pupil participation. Most staff attend and participate; however there could be increased opportunities in this area. Children and adults respond well to liturgy - for example 'The Lord be with you' - Response – 'And also with you'. The children participate well with the Lord's prayer complete with meaningful actions. Although Collective Worship enhances the area of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development, there is more that could be done in this area. Therefore the school should use its Christian character to enhance and challenge further the SMSC development of learners. Prayer is beginning to permeate through the life of the school. The Worship and Christian character action plan is a positive document with realistic timescales for action; as a consequence at the time of Inspection not all the points had been implemented.

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

The Christian values and love that underpin the school were tested last year and the whole school community was obviously shaken to the core by the sudden death of a much respected, long serving member of staff. But the school, instead of being permanently weakened by this tragic event, has been strengthened and this is testimony of the strong, sensitive, caring leadership of the headteacher and the pivotal role that the clergy and headteacher have forged together. The supportive governing body work well with the headteacher and clergy to ensure that the school is moving in the right direction and the monitoring and evaluation process is effective. All staff feel valued, respected and very much a part of the team, again testimony of the inclusive nature of the school. The headteacher clearly leads by example; her drive and enthusiasm, ably supported by her deputy and the clergy means that there is excellent capacity for St Mary's to continue developing as a highly effective church school.