



**Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report
Barley Voluntary Controlled Church of England School
Church End, Barley, Royston SG8 8JW**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 24th September 2008
Previous S23 Inspection: September 2004
URN: 312597
Headteacher: Julie Price
SIAS Inspector Name: Alan Thornsby
SIAS Inspector No: NS 137

School Context

Barley First school is a small school of 45 children that serves the village of Barley and the surrounding area. The majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. The school has a number of awards such as Healthy Schools Award and Quality Standards Award for Nursery and Reception that recognise strengths of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Barley First School as a Church of England school are good.

Barley School is a good school with many strong features. The quality of care that results in the outstanding personal development of each pupil is a result of the commitment of the head and staff to show Christian love in action in their everyday lives.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the head to the personal development of every child
- The ethos that promotes Christian love in action
- The strength of the links with the church and village community

Focus for development

- Create areas and opportunities for quiet personal reflection by pupils
- Make regular use of the church for worship
- Evaluate church school distinctiveness and use the findings to inform the school development plan

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

The ethos of care and belonging in this small school totally reflects Christian love in action. Pupils develop confidence and maturity within a family-like atmosphere. Pupils benefit from a safe and secure learning environment that creates high self-esteem. This allows pupils to support and recognise each others' achievements. Everyone receives a warm welcome when they arrive at the school. Relationships between all members of the school community are one of the strengths of the school. All pupils understand the 'learning ethos' of the school and enjoy their personalised learning saying 'our work is challenging because our teachers know what each of us can do'. The school works hard to meet the needs of each child. All children are valued and feel special because they are involved in making decisions. The size of the school means the whole school is the school council and is involved in exploring and resolving issues. Everyone has had input into the behaviour policy and health and safety risk assessment. Spiritual and moral development is a good because of the effective use of themed cross-curricular weeks. Pupils respond to these by asking perceptive questions that impact on their moral behaviour and spiritual awareness such as 'does God listen if we all talk to him at the same time?' and 'does he like people asking to win wars?' Cultural development is also good because of the opportunities to learn French and Spanish and use these languages in study weeks. Diversity weeks, for example, include food from other cultures prepared by the school cook. Everyone in school is justly proud of the 'Children's guide to the Churchyard' produced by the pupils with a member of the church and available for visitors.

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

Worship is central to the daily life of the school. It gives participants opportunities to share and explore the impact of Christian values on their lives. Leaders, who include all staff and a range of visitors, widen pupils' experience of forms of worship. Links to curriculum areas and personal experience readily engage pupils' attention. Pupils have a secure foundation on which to build a moral and spiritual awareness. The school lacks a hall but effective use of displays that include the Lord's Prayer in English and Spanish, a focus table and stimulating delivery allows pupils to experience a reverent atmosphere in a large room. The quiet way pupils enter shows their anticipation of a quiet reflective time. Pupils are encouraged by times of silence and reflection to pose 'big questions' in discussion during or after worship. Although pupils have an excellent understanding for their age of the value of prayer and reflection, they have difficulty in explaining simple rituals that are used in worship such as the significance of the lighted candle. Monitoring and evaluation through staff discussion and pupil questionnaires has raised the need to provide a space for personal reflection and prayer. The school has very strong links with the church because of regular visits from the vicar and other members of the congregation. The school has created a collage for the festival of St Margaret that is displayed in the church and joins the church to celebrate Harvest Festival, Easter and Christingle.

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

The head has a clear vision for the school that develops the whole child within a Christian community. This is shared by all and has resulted in a staff team committed to ongoing evaluation and improvement. Foundation governors provide a very effective bridge between school and church, involving the school in church activities. Although the governing body has yet to evaluate distinctiveness as a church school, involvement in school life and observations of worship have resulted in them providing more challenge and support to the school. Parents appreciate the open door policy of the school and the availability of the head and staff. They are well informed about the school and value their opinions being sought and considered. Good links with the local village and church means the school has a central role in the community. This is also reflected in the support from 'Friends of Barley School' and events such as the annual ball. The school is also represented on the parochial church council and this maintains the high profile of the school. Parents and members of the community support the school by providing out of school clubs for pupils.