



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Bromham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School
Grange Lane, Bromham, Bedford MK43 8NR**

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	7th February 2008
Previous S23 Inspection:	October 2002
URN:	109611
Headteacher:	Mrs Virginia Gilks
SIAS Inspector Name:	Catherine Large
SIAS Inspector No:	482

School Context

Bromham Church of England Lower School caters for pupils between the ages of 4 and 9. It is a larger than average sized lower school which draws the majority of its pupils from three villages. Most homes are privately owned. A significant minority of pupils come from outside the catchment area. The great majority of its pupils come from white British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below national averages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is in line with national averages. The school is on a split site separated by a field but joined by a footpath. The Foundation Years and Year 1 operate on one site and Years 2-4 on the other. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2008. It is a popular and well regarded school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bromham Lower as a Church of England school are good.

Bromham Lower School promotes its Christian character very well. This is evident in public documentation, in significant focal points of the building and, in particular, the clear Christian ethos statement adapted with the pupils to ensure their understanding. Christian values clearly underpin relationships at all levels and this has a very good impact on the personal development of its pupils. The strong links with the local churches are a significant factor in supporting and promoting the Christian ethos. The pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good in many ways but is rather limited to their own local environment and experience. The governing body is very supportive of the Christian vision for the school but does not currently have a policy of regularly reviewing the effectiveness of this vision in order to maintain and extend existing good practice.

Established strengths

- The Christian vision for the school is communicated very well to the parents, pupils and community.
- The pastoral care of pupils and the strategies to promote self-esteem are outstanding.
- Links with the local Christian community support and strengthen the Christian ethos.
- Basic Christian values are very evident in the quality of relationships and in the day to day management of pupils.

Focus for development

- Increase opportunities for pupils to become aware of the needs and experiences of people in the wider world.
- Build in a process of review in the planning cycle of development to further strengthen the Christian identity of the school and to monitor its effectiveness.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to organise and lead collective worship.

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

The Christian ethos of the school is evident in the high quality of relationships at all levels and across the full spectrum of school life. There is a strong sense of trust and community at both of the school sites. They benefit from a culture which consistently seeks to raise self-esteem. The 'Golden Wall' of praise, the 'Hundred Squares' for positive behaviour and the 'Special person' award are examples of this culture across the two sites. Through its reward systems the school promotes values of kindness and effort as well as achievement. This creates a very positive and effective learning environment for pupils of all abilities and needs. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent. The school has achieved an impressive range of awards which reflect the high standards of care and achievement of staff and pupils as well as the environment. The School Council is well structured and effective and its members are articulate in describing their contribution to school life, for example, the plans for better playground equipment. Pupils speak of feeling confident and safe. This is supported by a behaviour policy ('Golden Rules') which is discussed with pupils and displayed in classrooms as well as access to counsellors and an anti-bullying policy display. As they move through the school, pupils take on an increasing number of responsibilities, such as being 'eco warriors' and playground buddies. Year 4 pupils participate in an annual residential trip to develop their skills of independence. The pupils respond well to opportunities for fund raising for charity, including support for local homeless people and children in difficult circumstances. Their social and moral skills are outstanding and they have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong. Their spiritual development is good and strengthened through worship, links with the Christian community and religious education. The school has the potential to develop spiritual development further across the curriculum. At present, there are limited opportunities for pupils to engage with the wider community particularly in relation to other faiths and cultures or the needs of the developing world.

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

The quality of collective worship is good with some outstanding aspects. Worship enhances pupils' spiritual development. There is a strong sense of community at both sites. There is a strong commitment to the importance of collective worship by the management team and the local clergy, all of whom contribute to the programme. An overall plan identifies appropriate themes which focus on a range of broadly Christian values and makes links with the church calendar. At both sites there are clear Christian focal points and the school has invested in audio-visual resources to strengthen the impact of the worship. The use of a candle at times of reflection and prayer is effective. Worship opportunities are well supported by the clergy. For example, pupils took part in a 'living nativity' which was organised at Christmas. The pupils respond positively to opportunities to answer questions. They sing well and singing assemblies form part of their weekly experience. At both sites, the pupils share in corporate prayer. The Lower Site uses an appropriate school prayer and the Upper Site, the Lord's Prayer. Grace is said every day before lunch. This reinforces the Christian dimension to school life and worship. The support of the local Baptist church enables the whole school to worship together each month and to hold special Christmas services. The parish church is less physically accessible but the school does hold its Easter service there and the clergy support the school well in religious education and other aspects of school life. The pupils speak highly of the worship led by youth workers and the 'Open the Book' team who visit weekly to act out Bible stories. The planned outdoor worship area in the school grounds is a positive indication of the sharing that takes place between the local clergy, the community and the school. The newly appointed worship co-ordinator is aware of the development needs for worship and would benefit from closer links with the diocesan professional development programme. Pupils do recognise the importance of worship in the life of this church school although they feel they do not have many opportunities to plan and lead it in a more active way. Monitoring of worship is at an early stage and has not identified the impact on pupils or involved them in the process. However, there is good potential for improvement as pupils and staff display very positive attitudes to this aspect of school life.

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

There is strong support for the church school status from all levels of leadership and management, including the newly appointed headteacher and RE and worship co-ordinator. The school's status is evident in documentation and in the many signs and symbols around the school. The school's ethos statement makes the Christian vision clear and is expressed in language that is very pupil-friendly. Pupils understand the Christian ethos. There is very good communication with parents, pupils and the local churches. For example, the Christian context of the school was identified clearly for parents at the new Foundation level pupil intake evening. The churches are very supportive and welcome opportunities to extend this support in ways the school identifies. Links with feeder schools are strong. Involvement with the local community is also very good. School newsletters are informative and often reflect aspects of the school's Christian character. Community links are also fostered through contributions to the village magazine and church newsletters as well as events such as the Bromham Show and 'Proms in the playground'. Religious education is well embedded in the school's curriculum. The school has preserved its well established Christian ethos and this is evident in the quality of relationships and care and in its support for religious education and collective worship. However, the school recognises that current development planning does not include a regular opportunity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its church school status. The school has good capacity to challenge itself in some form of regular self-review.