

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Caldecote Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School

Manor Place
Upper Caldecote
Biggleswade
SG18 9DA

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Central Bedfordshire
Dates of inspection:	12 February 2013
Date of last inspection:	25 November 2008
School's unique reference number:	109596
Headteacher:	Lindsay Evans
Inspector's name and number:	Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

School context

Caldecote is a small popular school serving the village and surrounding area. The children come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and most are White British. Many children enter the school with low attainment, but as they progress through the school attainment become good.

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

Christian values are central to the everyday life of the school. This and the passion of the headteacher result in an inclusive and caring learning environment. There is a great sense of community because everyone is valued as a unique individual. High quality worship promotes pupils' reflections on Christian values to develop spiritually as well as academically.

Established strengths

- The vision and love of the head teacher that has inspired all to create an enjoyable and exciting Christian learning environment.
- The commitment of the head, staff and governors to develop the best learning opportunities for each individual child to reach their potential.
- The quality and range of assemblies that clearly impact on the everyday life and routines of the school.

Focus for development

- Ensure the high profile of Christian values and distinctiveness seen in the everyday life of the school are consistently celebrated in reflective displays.
- Formalise the systems for the evaluation of Christian ethos and worship, ensuring they are reflected in rigorous and evaluative self-assessment.
- Provide opportunities for children to plan and deliver acts of worship.

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

The school has a well-established ethos based on Christian love in action that is displayed by both adults and children. Every child is obviously valued as a unique individual regardless of his or her needs. Adults in school work to create an exciting learning environment where each child is challenged and supported to achieve its potential. Pupils acknowledge the work of their teachers commenting 'our school is small and we get more attention from our teachers, who want us to learn so they make lessons fun.' The whole community shares a sense of enjoyment in learning together. Everyone loves being in school and children are empowered to learn and grow because they know they are safe and secure. This includes the wrap round care provision and use of the 'lounge' where children are comfortable sitting on sofas for withdrawal activities. Excellent relationships between adults and children result in polite, confident and articulate pupils. They know what is expected of them in any situation because of the impact of Christian values that promote respect for each other. Pupils explain 'we love each other like Jesus did.' Their support for a range of charities is a further reflection of their expression of Christian love in action. Children experience a rich curriculum in which religious education and Christian values have a high profile. For example, during a lunch prepared and shared by the foundation class, a child excitedly shared her emergent writing 'I have written a Bible and want you to see it.' Cross-curricular links with RE and worship support learning in literacy. Spiritual Moral Cultural and Social development is good because of the curriculum and effective use of the rich variety of outdoor facilities including the garden where children grow produce to be shared. Although displays in school often show the distinctive character of the school, classroom displays do not consistently reinforce the Christian values that are a vital part of daily life.

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

Worship is central to the exploration, reinforcement and celebration of the ethos of the school. Pupils experience a wide range of leaders including the vicar and other regular visitors who deliver high quality acts of worship that engage all children. These enable pupils to reflect on the impact of Bible stories and Christian values on their own lives. Children have a good knowledge of the life of Jesus and its impact on their lives. They explain the symbolism of the candle and events such as Christingle. A typical comment from a child is 'worship makes me think.' For example the children's worker from a local Christian group used a plain and a decorated box and asked the children which held the best treasure. She then used puppets to illustrate the story of 'the two men at prayer' to illustrate the moral of the story. Children enter the hall as a special place with a sense of anticipation, focussed by music and slides. The use of a common format for worship, including of the ritual of a shared greeting and response, a hymn and the Lords Prayer ensures that children are comfortable and confident. They have also assimilated the closing blessing from the vicar and naturally share it after prayer. They describe prayer as 'a time to talk with God' and prepare for prayer by using a series of hand signals. Although children have regular opportunities to write and share prayers and participate in worship they do not yet have sufficient opportunities to plan and deliver worship themselves. The curate is a regular visitor to the foundation class developing an awareness of Christianity through stories and songs. On visits to church children meet Father Benedict (a teddy bear) dressed in church vestments to show church seasons. The range of innovative worship includes Godly play and the use of the school grounds as well as indoors. Easter and Christmas Journeys (with a real donkey) and Stations of the Cross promote philosophical thinking that engages children in discussion in the playground and classroom. Regular discussion between adults and children, senior leaders and the vicar inform evaluation and development. Although currently there is no formal system for monitoring, governors are kept informed of developments by feedback from foundation governors. A pathway and gate between school and church is being developed to strengthen the physical links between the two.

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

The head has a passionate vision that is reflected in the school motto 'countless possibilities for children.' She works tirelessly to inspire staff and governors to create the best opportunities and learning environment for all children. Adults in school make continual reflection and refinement to develop the school as 'a meaningful experience for children to make links with Christian faith at appropriate level. Governors and staff fully understand and actively support the ethos of the school, informed by the work of foundation governors. Although there is much informal discussion of the impact of the ethos and care of the school, the current self-assessment does not effectively evaluate the high quality practice and policy resulting from distinctive Christian character of the school. With this in place the school has a good capacity for future development.

Parents praise the welcome, inclusivity and support of the school. They know each child is valued as an individual who is fully supported regardless of his or her needs. They value the opportunities for informal discussion with teachers and headteacher at the beginning and end of each day. Typical of their many comments 'here children enjoy school and often learn things without realising. They are happy and confident and want to reach their potential.' Parents are very aware of Christian values, the church year and links with the church that bring the whole community together and are a source of love and respect for the school. The Parents Association is active in promoting the links between school, church and community. The Scarecrow and Watering Can festivals organised by the headteacher and school further reinforce these links.