



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report
Caldecote Church of England Lower School
Manor Place, Upper Caldecote, Biggleswade SG18 9DA



Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 25th November 2008
Previous S23 Inspection: January 2006
URN: 109596
Headteacher: Sue Drury
SIAS Inspector Name: Lyn Field
SIAS Inspector No: 151

School Context

This is a small village school that is undersubscribed as there is little mobility within the village. Pupils come from a range of home backgrounds, most of which are White British. They start school with abilities that are typical for their age and the proportion needing special help with learning is average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Caldecote as a Church of England school are satisfactory overall.

The strengths of the school lie in the quality of the care and relationships that the staff provide for children. Pupils identify the Christian values of respect, love and trust as the ones that best describe how they experience life in school. However, although the staff and governors are committed to the Christian ethos of the school there is no strategic plan for its development as a church school.

Established strengths

- The caring relationships between staff and pupils
- The contribution that worship makes to pupils' understanding of Christian values
- Pupils' positive attitudes to religious education

Focus for development

- To engage all groups in the school community in looking at how well Christian values are used in all areas of the school's work
- To monitor how well the opportunities for spiritual development are used and promoted around the school
- To make use of diocesan support and training

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

Pupils are confident and welcoming. They have positive attitudes to learning and value each other's achievements. This is because they enjoy good relationships with all adults in the school and benefit from the way in which teachers and classroom assistants work together as a team. The staff have taken care that the current tensions with the PTA do not affect the pupils' life in school. A policy for spiritual development has been produced in response to the last inspection but it is not used to monitor how well pupils use the opportunities provided for them. Teachers regularly discuss spiritual values with their classes in the course of normal lessons. For example, the writing of letters to Father Christmas is preceded by a discussion about the need to be grateful for gifts. As a result, most pupils have a good understanding of Christian values such as respect and trust, although there is little in classroom displays to reinforce this aspect of their learning. A school council has been established and is developing its role. Pupils feel that teachers already listen carefully to their views but are still keen to have a more formal voice in the school. Religious education is a popular subject and strengthens pupils' moral development. They have a good knowledge of other faiths, in addition to Christianity, because they are interested in finding the common threads in order to shed light on their own beliefs.

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

Worship is a strength of the school's Christian ethos and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils look forward to this time because they enjoy the distinctive atmosphere and feel they learn in a different way to lessons. They make good use of time to think quietly and the co-ordinator is keen to develop this aspect of worship. Behaviour in worship is excellent because leaders use a variety of ways to present stories and involve pupils in action songs. This maintains their interest but at present there are limited opportunities for them to plan and deliver worship themselves. Clergy, visitors from other churches and teachers all bring ideas from their own experiences as worshippers and this gives pupils the confidence to pray and to talk openly about God and Jesus. The themes are well planned by the co-ordinator, to reflect the church year and to focus on key Christian teaching. Pupils build up a good knowledge of Bible stories and their meanings. For example, they suggested a number of possible Bible passages in trying to work out Christian definitions for judgment and mercy. Worship is discussed informally by staff and pupils but there is no forum for gathering the views of other groups in the school community. This means there is no overall plan for how worship might develop and opportunities are missed to share practice with other schools through training and conferences.

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

The staff work hard to maintain the Christian ethos of the school. Their personal commitment ensures that RE, worship and the way they conduct themselves provides clear direction for pupils in how to relate to each other and tackle the bigger issues in life. The links with the church are well established and the clergy team are familiar and welcome figures in school. Services in church are well supported by parents. These occasions enable pupils to become familiar with worship in church and to feel part of the larger church community. The issues from the previous inspection, however, have not been properly addressed by governors. In particular, there has been no discussion of how Christian values inform all aspects of school life. As a result they have not had a strong enough influence on the management of the recent difficulties between the school and the parent body. The current state of relationships does not sit comfortably with the ethos of a church school. Not enough is made of links with the Diocese to support staff and governors in their roles.