



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Carlton VC Lower School
The Moor, Carlton, Bedford MK43 7LP**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 1st May 2008
Previous S23 Inspection: 9th-10th February 2005
URN: 109610
Headteacher: Mrs Sue Burt
SIAS Inspector Name: Revd Vanessa G Cato
SIAS Inspector No:

School Context

Carlton Lower School is a village school with 76 children aged 4-9 from mainly White, British, relatively well-advantaged backgrounds. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school is set in large, imaginatively laid out grounds in pleasant surroundings, some distance from the church. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average, though few have a statement of special educational need.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Carlton VC Lower School as a Church of England school are good

The School's ethos is based on Christian values and principles, modelled by the staff and appreciated by the parents. The school welcomes and encourages church involvement and the church is very supportive of the school. The school offers many opportunities for awe and wonder, and an outstanding atmosphere of mutual respect in which children and adults are able to openly discuss and explore questions of life and faith. There is a strong sense of community.

Established strengths

- Mutual respect leading to confident, well-rounded children
- Communication and shared ownership – both within the school community, and with the village and church community
- Strong Christian values and principles, demonstrated particularly in practical and compassionate support and care of pupils, staff, parents and volunteers.

Focus for development

- Establish a good relationship with the new vicar and further strengthen the links with the local church by making greater use of the building for school worship and providing a report for the church annual meeting.
- Encourage a wider view of the Church by developing links with the Diocese and the wider Anglican Communion.

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

There is a positive learning environment where children are challenged, but not pressured, and where self-confidence and self-belief are evident. Pupils demonstrate high standards in attitudes, values and care for the environment and for others. This is encouraged in a variety of ways. Pupils are involved in setting rules and dealing with behavioural issues through group discussion. Older children carry out leadership roles responsibly. Some are trained as "Buddies". Pupils play well together and report no bullying. They are active in their concern for the environment and for the less fortunate. The school has developed a "Parent Café" which supports parents in a gentle and sensitive way and gives opportunities to discuss school issues.

The Spirituality Policy is well written and followed through. Awe and wonder are encouraged, particularly through the thoughtful and imaginative development of the school grounds and through classroom displays and visits. There is an extensive and varied selection of RE and Collective Worship resources. The school environment reflects its Christian foundation, whilst also respecting the beliefs and practices of other faiths. Links between church and school are very good. Church members run an oversubscribed Bible-based Monday Club in the school for the older pupils. The new Vicar has open access to the school and will become actively involved. The church prays regularly for the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship plays an important role in the life of the school. Prayer underpins the school day, with classroom prayers at the end of the day chosen or written by the children. The children helped to rewrite the school prayer. Governors' meetings begin with prayer. The school has a "Reflection Corner".

Most children seem to respond well in Collective Worship, with the younger children particularly engaged with the example observed. There is a simple but effective focal table, a good balance of visual teaching, Bible stories and time for reflection. The children sing well and enthusiastically. Most adult staff are present.

Collective worship records show strong moral and social themes, while also focussing on the Church Year. Support of various charities follows through these themes. The children especially remember worship with Bible stories, particularly when church members lead with the "Open Book" Bible story dramas and when they themselves act out stories and take part in other ways. There is a good understanding of how the stories relate to their own lives. Pupils feel comfortable in church on the occasions the school worships there, however greater use could be made of the church for worship, especially at key points in the Church Year.

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

The Head gives strong and effective leadership and is committed with staff and governors to the Church School ethos. This is particularly evident in the way all school staff work together as a team, the way adults working in the school model Christian behaviour and attitudes, and in the atmosphere of mutual support and respect fostered at all levels.

Both adults and children are treated as having an important contribution to make to the school and strengths are valued and used. Parents are appreciative of the school's ethos and the way the school strives to involve and support them as well as their children.

An excellent relationship has been fostered with the church and community which should be nurtured and developed, for example, by providing the church annual meeting with a report. The school also needs to expand its vision by exploring and developing links with the diocese and the wider Anglican Communion.