

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Carlton Voluntary Controlled Lower School**

The Moor  
Carlton  
Bedford  
MK43 7LP

#### **Diocese: St Albans**

Local authority: Bedfordshire  
Date of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2012  
Date of last inspection: May 2008  
School's unique reference number: 109610  
Headteacher: Sue Burt  
Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

#### **School context**

Carlton Lower is a small rural school of 73 pupils serving the village of Carlton and local area, with most pupils from a White-British heritage. The school is set in extensive and diverse grounds that are reflected in the range of national awards held by the school, including the 'CPRE Living Countryside Award' and 'Woodland Trust Green Tree award'. The school also holds 'Healthy schools', 'Basic Skills' and 'International Schools Awards.' The hall is also used as a village hall as part of the community facilities.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Carlton as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

Christian values underpin the practice and policy of Carlton Lower School. Pupils are nurtured by dedicated adults and become mature and articulate, with great confidence to discuss matters of faith. They are given a secure foundation to make moral and spiritual decisions that will inform their lives as members of a multi-faith society.

#### **Established strengths**

- The impact of Christian values on the attitudes and academic and personal development of all pupils
- The commitment of head, staff and governors in providing a stimulating and nurturing learning environment where all children flourish
- The confident, articulate and mature contributions of pupils
- The sense of belonging and support between school, church and village communities

#### **Focus for development**

- Ensure pupils have greater opportunities to share their knowledge enthusiasm and maturity in the planning and delivery of worship

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

The school has a distinctive ethos, securely based on a set of school identified Christian values that drive the policy and practice of the school. There is a great sense of service. Christian love in action ensures that everyone is valued as a unique individual. The school motto 'Work hard and reach for the stars and you will go far' encourages children. Dedicated teachers ensure that all children have the challenge and support to achieve well, nurturing empathy and self-esteem. Excellent relationships with the whole school community are a strength. Pupils are thoughtful, articulate and with mature attitudes show enjoyment in learning together and explain 'it is actually brilliant to make mistakes because they help you learn.' They are very aware of the Christian foundation of the school as values of Jesus who 'teaches us to do the right thing.' They confidently explain that 'Jesus came and settled peace. If we don't share his values there is no peace, just wars.' High quality religious education lessons engage children of all abilities to learn about and from religion and link this learning to their own lives. This results, for example, in a well-developed understanding of God in the Old Testament who, in the New Testament is a loving God because Jesus said 'there is no limit to forgiveness.' Opportunities for reflection in lessons and around school enable pupils to consider their own faith and decision-making. Throughout the school displays such as 'Joseph's Coat', and 'special places' reinforce the values of the school. Many of these pose reflective questions to challenge the thinking of pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is securely underpinned by a very effective and creative curriculum that supports learning through engaging a range of learning styles. SMSC is further promoted through use of the Bedford Three Faiths Trail, a joint project with a school in Ghana and the use of the extensive school grounds with nature trail, school pets and garden.

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

Worship is based on a well-planned cycle of themes based on the church year, Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and the school values. Effective planning is ensured through the involvement of all staff and the vicar. Staff discussion, visits and observation by governors inform developments that are fed into the school development plan. Pupils enjoy a range of worship formats including 'Open the Book' to share Old and New Testament Bible stories and an aerobics assembly to give pupils experience of calming and reflecting after invigorating body work out. Children understand the meaning of liturgical colours, used with a Bible and cross on a focus table, with a candle that they explain symbolises that 'Jesus is the light of the world.' Pupils are engaged through active story telling. They participate in role-play and provide thoughtful answers. Every assembly has a time for reflection, as well as a thought with which to leave assembly. They often share 'a shake and smile' explained by pupils as 'the same as we do when we fall out.' They have good knowledge of Christian symbolism and the church year and explain the importance of prayer as 'time to be on your own with God to thank Him for everything.' Although children participate in a range of ways, including sharing an act of worship with children from St Joseph's School, they currently have few opportunities to plan and deliver worship. The vicar leads monthly worship and supports the teaching of religious education in school. The use of the school for a monthly 'All Age Service' and use of church for festival services gives pupils experience of belonging to a wider worshipping community. This is further enhanced by displays of children's work in church and the annual Easter garden made and presented by pupils to church. The school also joins the local community for Remembrance Day and carol services.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision 'to provide the best learning opportunities for each individual child, within a Christian ethos.' This shared vision enables adults in school to serve God and each other and results in all pupils achieving well because of the holistic impact of the Christian ethos.

Staff, governors and parents present a united team supporting the education of children. The schools set of values, agreed by everyone in school, have increasingly been linked to their Christian foundation using the 'Christian Values 4 Schools ' website. Foundation governors have a secure understanding of the life of the school and its Christian ethos through regular visits. They see the impact of Christian values and how pupils are nurtured as part of these visits. Discussions with the headteacher and the challenge and support of governors as critical friends inform self-evaluation. All members of the governing body are proactive in the life of the school and make regular visits including sharing worship. These ensure governors are aware of the strengths of the school and its distinctive Christian character. Christian values and religious education are reviewed regularly to ensure the school development plan enables the ethos of care and the nurture of children to be paramount. Parents recognise the impact of the school on their children and praise the sense of family and community with both church and village communities. The school encourages parental involvement that includes a joint decoration of the hall at Christmas. The reputation of the school reflects its role as a strength of the village community and the shared role of the hall as a school and community facility. This is also reflected in the school joining in the village 'Open gardens' project. The school has good links with the local group of church schools, in addition to links with a Catholic school in a contrasting area.