

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Dewhurst St Mary Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Churchgate, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross EN8 9ND**

<b>Diocese:</b>	<b>St Albans</b>
Local Authority:	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection:	2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2011
Date of last inspection:	6 <sup>th</sup> June 2008
School's unique reference number:	117415
Headteacher:	Mrs Keely Folker
Inspector's name and number:	Lindsay Fraser (107) & Martin Willis

#### **School context**

Dewhurst St Mary is an urban primary school, smaller than many other schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage whilst other pupils represent a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs/disabilities is above average, including those with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved the Activemark award, National Healthy Schools Status, and an Information and Communication Technology award.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dewhurst St Mary as a Church of England school are satisfactory.**

This is a satisfactory school in which the headteacher and staff have worked hard to meet the needs of all pupils, overcoming many barriers along the way. This has resulted in a school where all are highly valued and cared for, so that pupils now behave extremely well and try their best. The time is now right for the school to further develop and celebrate the distinctively Christian nature of the school.

#### **Established strengths**

- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils with high quality pastoral care
- Pupils display good behaviour and are encouraged to have high aspirations
- The strong partnership between the school and the St Mary's Church clergy
- The school environment and high standard of display contributes well to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils.

#### **Focus for development**

- To organise professional development for Governors and staff on Christian Distinctiveness
- To develop further the Christian character of Dewhurst St Mary's by introducing formal monitoring and evaluation of the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- To ensure that daily Worship gives opportunities for spiritual development
- To strengthen links with the Diocese in order to benefit from guidance, resources, training and initiatives

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

Pupils feel valued and special. This is as a result of the excellent knowledge and understanding which every member of staff has of each pupil, the celebratory events to praise their achievements and high quality intervention strategies. Parents also feel that their opinions are valued and acted upon as appropriate. The school environment is welcoming and vibrant with a very high standard of display, including those which enhance the place of the church in the life of the school and those which illustrate the beliefs and teachings of other faiths, such as those created in the recent Art / RE week. Good examples were observed in RE where the quality of discussion and examination of feelings, inspired by works of art, contributed to the Distinctive Christian Character. Links with other countries, including partner schools in Zambia and France enhance the cultural understanding of pupils. Values Education is evident throughout the school, although this is not specifically linked to Christian beliefs and teachings. There is a sense of caution within the school regarding overt Christian practices and teachings, with little information being given in communications with parents regarding the school's church school status. Surveys of parents and pupils have not yet been utilised to enable further ideas to be considered.

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

The school has developed a strong link with St Mary's Church since the last inspection and parents, staff and pupils have enjoyed the worship at Harvest, Christingle, Easter and Leavers' services held in the church building. Parents state that the church services and the class assemblies in school (which parents are invited to) have helped to develop a positive sense of community. The services help to maintain Anglican traditions.

The school holds an assembly each day but there is a marked contrast in worship opportunities and impact at different types of assembly. Learners particularly appreciate the worship on Tuesdays led by the minister from St Mary's Church. Both pupils and parents comment on his use of good humour to communicate and make relevant, the messages from Bible stories. The use of SEAL themes on Mondays develops some spiritual awareness and good social and moral education. However, staff and Governors acknowledge that the spiritual dimension is less explicit on other days of the week when the focus of assemblies mainly relates to celebrations of personal achievement. This arrangement limits spiritual development and growth. Although a school prayer is said regularly, when asked what pupils were thinking about during the prayer, some children commented more about personal aspiration ("the success of other people and how we can be successful") rather than any thoughts relating to God, or possible spiritual inspiration and wonder. There is scope for greater use of music, song, prayer and Bible stories in assemblies to enhance worship - which may well lead pupils to think more frequently beyond themselves, ponder deeper questions and respond accordingly.

Worship is planned to include the celebration of major festivals, values in general and SEAL themes. There is some joint planning with the minister for services in church, but planning for worship in school is not often given high priority. The worship coordinator recognises that there is no formal evaluation of worship by staff, governors or pupils and that this is a key focus for attention, as it was in the previous inspection. Most teachers have a share in leading worship but there has been little professional development in this area for staff or governors.

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

The school leadership team has been very successful in developing an ethos which encourages and promotes high self-esteem, excellent behaviour and strong relationships at all levels. A clear vision for developing pupils' aspirations, learning and well-being is understood and shared by all stakeholders, based on a well-defined set of school values. However, the governors and school leaders recognise that raising the profile of the Christian vision is an area for development. To raise that profile they are aware that professional development in the understanding of the Distinctive Christian character of the school is a priority, especially with the imminent appointment of a new headteacher. This will enable them to evaluate the school as a church school, including Collective Worship, in order to make future improvements. Since the last inspection the new incumbent has developed a strong relationship with the school, earning the respect of the pupils, staff and parents who speak of the impact of his teaching and faith. Pupils have been involved in the local community through the singing of carols in the local nursing home, where harvest gifts are also distributed. By developing a closer relationship with the diocese the school will be able to explore further opportunities to involve themselves in other initiatives to further enhance the experiences of the pupils.

SIAS report March 2011 Dewhurst St Mary Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School EN8 9ND