



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Clement's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School
Cheshunt Wash, Cheshunt EN8 0LU

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 11th September 2007
Previous S23 Inspection: June 2005
URN: 117427
Headteacher: Sam Sweetman
SIAS Inspector Name: Lyn Field
SIAS Inspector No: 151

School Context

St Clement's is a smaller than average school. Most pupils are White British and come from a range of backgrounds. Their attainment on entry is broadly average but the school's own analysis identifies social and emotional development as areas of weakness. A higher proportion of pupils than usual have learning difficulties or disabilities. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are relatively new in post.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Clement's as a Church of England school are good.

This is a school that is now clearly focused on raising standards. It is making imaginative changes to the curriculum so that what it does as a church school is directly helping children to develop their learning skills. The active involvement of the church offers children an environment where they can grow into responsible members of their community.

Established strengths

- The insight and direction that is provided by the school's own self-evaluation
- The inspirational work of the headteacher in leading the school forward
- The support for children provided by the whole church community

Focus for development

- To ensure that collective worship and RE have a significant role in the revised curriculum in order to sustain spiritual growth
- To help children develop skills in personal reflection

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

Pupils recognise that the school is now focused on helping them to achieve their best. They respond well to the high expectations of their teachers and there is an excellent working atmosphere in each classroom which means pupils make the most of their lessons. They can explain where Christian values such as honesty and trust play a part in school life, and use their sponsorship of an African child as an example of selflessness. Many pupils are only just beginning to use these values in, for example, making decisions about their own behaviour or electing members of the school council. The school has identified that spiritual development is at an early stage because opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they have learned are not always built into lessons. The changes, however, that the school has made in RE and collective worship, which are described later in this report, show how distinctively Christian elements of the curriculum are improving the self-esteem and personal skills of pupils. The headteacher has created an effective staff team because the contributions of everyone are valued. Teachers and assistants plan lessons together so that they are clear how they will achieve their aims and this has the maximum impact on the progress pupils make.

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

The headteacher and governors have raised the profile of worship. It is the reason the school meets together each day and is making a tangible difference to the lives of pupils. Children are learning how symbolism and rituals express key beliefs and important moments in life through worshipping regularly in church, for example, by holding special services for new Y3 pupils and Y6 leavers. Pupils say worship helps them to understand the meaning of Christian values and it is gradually drawing parents into church activities. This improvement has been achieved by the energy of the vicar and staff in developing ways for pupils to actively participate. In spite of their efforts, many children still lack self-confidence and are only slowly developing skills in personal reflection. All of this limits their spiritual growth. The staff are aware that this affects pupils' progress in other curriculum areas and so it is a significant area for improvement. In response to this, the staff have created a handbook for class worship that gives clear direction away from story telling to exploring with children how faith relates to ethical and moral issues. Teachers have supported this initiative with 'Something to think about' boards and pupils are already taking an interest in the images and quotations displayed there. It is clear that the school is clearly focused on how worship can make a difference to how well children learn in other subjects. This is guided by the outcomes of questionnaires to parents and the discussions a foundation governor has with pupils. The commitment of clergy and staff to make new initiatives work and the initial response of pupils indicates significant improvement is being made.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

The school's evaluation of RE is concise and analytical. It explains why standards are only just reaching average, what has contributed to this and what needs to be done in both the long and short term. The outcomes of this form part of the school development plan which demonstrates the value governors place on RE in the curriculum. Standards are improving in the younger classes because teachers correctly assess the point pupils have reached and sharply focused questioning engages their interest and challenges them to progress at a faster rate. In the older classes significant gaps in pupils' knowledge makes it difficult for children to respond to tasks that require hypotheses or reflective thinking. In spite of this, they persevere with challenging activities because they are interested in the subject. Pupils

feel it is important for their general development and are enthusiastic about visits to places of worship in their work on other faiths. They describe how these have helped them understand how religious faith shapes the way people live their lives. In response to the issues that have emerged from the evaluation of RE, the headteacher and the vicar have planned a series of lessons to run in parallel with the current scheme. They have made appropriate choices about how to focus these sessions which are principally designed to develop children's enquiry skills and spiritual awareness.

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

The school's self-evaluation is highly effective because it results in action to address specific issues. The senior staff recognise that they are at a point of transition from knowing what problems exist to finding the right solutions. The school has decided to make radical changes to the curriculum in order to meet the broad spiritual and cultural needs of young people in this community. It is aware that the decision to introduce the International Primary Curriculum requires careful planning to ensure that RE and collective worship make a significant contribution to what children experience. This demonstrates how Christian values challenge the headteacher and governors in providing the best for children. There is a real sense of excitement in what is being achieved and this comes from the leadership of the headteacher. She is supported by a team of staff and governors who observe, analyse and make changes in the context of the Christian ethos of the school. The changes that have been introduced this term are imaginative and creative. They also show real insight into how individual initiatives contribute to the overall vision for the school, as is the case with class worship and the new strand of RE. The partnership with the Church and the Diocese produce a real impact on pupils in addition to the regular contact they have with the vicar through worship. A group of volunteers regularly support children with their reading and act as support staff when needed. In the winter months pupils entertain elderly members of the congregation for lunch. The school is increasingly making a valuable contribution to projects for church schools. The relationships that evolve from these activities give children and adults experience of responsibility and of belonging to a larger faith community.