



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
The Common
Chorleywood
Herts WD3 5SG**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 18th September 2007
Previous S23 Inspection: 15/16th May 2002
URN: 117561
Headteacher: Mrs E. L. Brett
SIAS Inspector Name: Catherine Large
SIAS Inspector No: 482

School Context

Christ Church school has 242 pupils on roll. This number includes the nursery. It is an average-sized primary school located in a socially advantaged area. It is a popular, over subscribed school, located next to the parish church. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils have a white British heritage and none is at an early stage of learning English.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church Primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding

The staff and governors of Christ Church school are totally committed to its Christian foundation and this is evident in all its policies and practices. It has an exceptionally strong and positive link with the church. This distinctive Christian dimension creates a very effective environment for learning. Pupils are happy in school and value the strong sense of community. Their spiritual development is excellent. Parents appreciate the Christian ethos and speak highly of the school and its staff.

Established strengths

- The leadership of the headteacher and the governing body
- The quality of relationships between all members of the school community
- The strong links with the church and the mutual support they offer to each other
- The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils
- The quality of collective worship

Focus for development

- Ensure teachers plan their teaching of RE to reflect the standards of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus
- Increase opportunities for pupils to encounter members of other faiths

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

The school's work is strongly rooted in Christian values. It fulfils its mission statement to 'serve its community by providing education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice'. Pupils feel safe and happy in the school and make regular reference to the sense of being part of a 'family'. This is encouraged by the linking of individual pupils from each year into 'family groups'. There is a strong sense of trust and community in the school. Statistics show that standards are above average. The school's provision for pupils with the range of abilities is good and plans are in place to monitor progress more systematically across all subjects.

The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is outstanding. It is particularly effective in the spiritual aspects of school life as pupils are given many opportunities to be reflective, to care for others and to express their sense of wonder at the natural world. For example, Year 6 pupils participate in a 'Spirituality morning' at the church where they address issues relating to faith and are encouraged to reflect and question. The involvement of the church team is very significant in the school as its members are involved in many activities including clubs, playground games and residential trips. As pupils move through the school they are given a very good range of opportunities to take responsibility. For example, the School Council is active and effective and prefects in Year 6 respond extremely well to the wide range of opportunities provided to support other classes and the staff.

The display environment of the school is used well to stimulate an appreciation of the wider world and to raise self-esteem. The model Sukkah in the hall supports the theme of Harvest from a Jewish perspective. Chorleywood common, which is adjacent to the school, is incorporated effectively into aspects of the curriculum. This includes the religious education curriculum where, for example, Year 1 pupils explore the wonders of the natural world before writing prayers of thanksgiving in their lesson.

Behaviour is good and pupils show respect to all staff. Where necessary, effective procedures are in place to deal with areas of concern. Pupils are confident that bullying is dealt with effectively.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a central feature of school life and pupils are emphatic that it is important to them. They value the sense of community that it gives them and can apply the values that are promoted into their lives. They enjoy singing and participating in a variety of ways. They recognise the importance of being given opportunities to pray and to be reflective. The proximity of the church enables it be used regularly for worship. These occasions mean a lot to the pupils. As well as festival times, other services at the church include Remembrance, the welcoming and blessing of members of the Reception class and the blessing of those pupils leaving at the end of Year 6. Parents support these occasions well.

Planning indicates that Bible stories and the Church Year are central to the programme. Some significant occasions in the calendar of other faith groups are also included, together, with a focus on the school's 'Values' programme. In this way, pupils experience an appropriate range of topics which support their personal development.

Worship is not confined to the times when the whole school meets together. Grace is said before lunch and each class has its own prayer for use at the end of the day. In one classroom, pupils identify their own personal prayer requests and this gives rise to a beneficial opportunity for smaller group worship. Given the positive attitude to worship by pupils and staff, this is potential area for development which could further strengthen the spiritual experience of pupils. The maturity of pupils with regard to the Christian ethos should also enable the school to engage them in some evaluation of their worship experience.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The school has recently been in a transition stage with regard to the subject. Circumstances in the school have delayed the full introduction of the new Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. However, plans are now being implemented to remedy this situation. Teachers are receiving training with regard to other world faiths and the range of resources necessary to support the syllabus is being strengthened. Evidence from lessons across the whole school shows that teaching and learning is good overall. Standards in pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity are well above average. For example, Year 2 pupils are able to discuss the significance of the cross for Christians.

Pupils are able to reflect upon and discuss the meaning of Bible stories and relate them to everyday life. They take the subject seriously and enjoy the many opportunities they have to express their ideas in creative ways. Many are very perceptive in their questioning. They are confident in speaking about their own faith. For example, one Year 5 pupil, in reading out her own prayer to go into a Jewish mezuzah, spoke of thanking God for being with her when her dog died.

The church building and the church team are used very effectively to support learning in religious education. At present there are limited opportunities for pupils to visit or encounter members of other faith communities although some good contacts are being established with schools and teachers from a wider area. Teachers are able to make effective use of the Interactive White Board to 'visit' other places of worship in virtual tours.

Recent developments in planning the subject are improving the breadth and balance of the overall curriculum. At present, the school recognises it needs to ensure that teachers plan their teaching of RE to reflect the standards of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. Assessment of pupils' progress in relation to these standards is currently under-developed.

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

The headteacher and foundation governors are totally committed to the Christian vision for the school. They work very closely together in order to ensure that Christian values are embedded in the whole life of the school. The partnership between the church and the school is very strong and this benefits the pupils in many ways. The church uses the school premises for youth activities on Sunday, increasing the sense of mutual support.

The school surveys pupils and parents regularly and governors inform them of their response. For example, parents expressed some uncertainty about the RE curriculum and so outline schemes were sent home with the newsletter. On inspection, parents were overwhelmingly appreciative of the Christian ethos. There is a very strong and active PTA which supports the school.

Links with the diocese are strong and the headteacher attends training courses and has a clear idea of Church school expectations. Foundation governors support the Christian vision very well but would benefit from some training so that they can gain a wider understanding of how they can continue to monitor and challenge the school.

The school has very strong links with secondary schools and groups within the parish. Pupils' awareness of the needs of the wider community is strengthened by visits to and visitors from groups. These include those supported in Charities' Week and others such as Watford New Hope Trust at harvest time. They have a special and active link with Papua New Guinea as a result of a missionary contact.

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