

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Ursula Taylor Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School
High Street
Clapham
Bedford MK41 6EG

Diocese of St Albans

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| Local authority: | Bedford Borough |
| Dates of inspection: | 25 January 2012 |
| Date of last inspection: | 26 March 2009 |
| School's unique reference number: | 109597 |
| Headteacher: | Mrs Lindsay Fraser |
| Inspector's name and number: | Mrs Mel Adams, 58 |

School context

The school is a two form entry lower school whose pupils largely come from the village of Clapham. It works in close partnership with Clapham parish church. The school population is largely white British heritage and there are a number of children from a range of different faiths and cultures. The number of children with identified special educational needs is few and achievement has risen over recent years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of [name of school] as a Church of England school are [judgement].

This is because there is a clear understanding of how the school's Christian foundation can support and challenge all members of the school community summarised in their strap line: 'Living God's love together we flourish'. The impact of this is clearly evident amongst all who work and learn together day by day with excellent relationships and attitudes leading to very good progress in learning.

Established strengths

- The dynamic and very clear focus of the Head teacher in driving forward the schools aims and values which now permeate all aspects of school life.
- The extent to which the school's 'strap line' summarises the day to day impact of Christian values on all members of the school community
- The extent to which the daily act of worship has an impact across the curriculum, learning and relationships.

Focus for development

- Building on the children's excellent understanding of Christian values, to embed and further develop the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by providing greater levels of challenge for all year groups to extend their knowledge and understanding further.
- To further enhance worship by continuing to explore possibilities for creating opportunities for prayer for all members of the school community

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

The school's recently adopted 'strap line' encapsulates its distinctive Christian character which is outstanding. Clear Christian values permeate the life of the school. Children are fully aware of these values and act upon them, understanding as described by one child that they 'make us the people we are'. Behaviour is excellent as are attitudes to learning. All staff are committed to modelling and promoting Christian values. As a result, relationships between the staff team are cohesive and supportive. Relationships between staff and children are built on mutual respect, enhancing the day to day experiences of all who learn and work together in the school. Parents are very clear in their approval of the values which they say are evident at home. Through excellent communication from the school parents are kept well informed and are able to support both their children's personal and academic development. Values are also evident across the curriculum. One child described how the value of perseverance had helped improve her learning and a teacher was able to use the strap line to motivate a child to learn. Recent curriculum planning development identifying opportunities for social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of learning is ensuring that children are developing understanding in these areas. This can be very effective, such as the year 2 class who through a time of reflection about looking after the earth were able to discuss in a deeply thoughtful and respectful way how they could personally respond to the challenge. Children's recorded work shows some opportunities for writing and drawing to express their understanding and feelings and this is increasingly evident in different curriculum areas as the children move through the school. Children are very aware of their school as a community and recognise that it would not be the same without the values they follow. Supporting village activities through the choir or delivering harvest parcels gives opportunities to contribute to the wider community, and support for pupils in a school in Uganda along with support for a range of charities gives children a growing awareness of social responsibility. Curriculum projects such as learning about the unfairness of global food distribution further support opportunities to consider their own roles and responsibilities. Children have a clear understanding of the Christian faith along with a variety of different faiths and cultures giving them a growing understanding of their own position in national and global communities. Children of all faiths and none are able to benefit from the distinctive Christian character of the school through the practical application of Christian values which are readily accessible and acceptable to all. Displays around the school celebrate its church school identity. The mission statement is displayed in the main entrance. A poppy display along with a train display expressing how children have demonstrated their values at home, affirm the extent to which what children learn about in school is becoming part of their lives as a whole.

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

The daily meeting together is clearly designated 'collective worship' indicating the school's commitment to providing a setting for staff and children to learn, reflect and pray. Steered by their agreed values which are decided on through discussion with staff, children, the Head teacher and the Vicar, they are explained through Bible and secular stories and help children to understand the importance of them in their own lives. Children participate enthusiastically through song, prayer and interacting confidently with those leading worship. The understanding gained in worship links to learning, as when the vicar's explanation of needs and wants related to class discussion about global moral issues around deforestation. Worship is also taken beyond the end of the session as children continue to sing the worship song as they return to class. Willingness to participate and respond is further illustrated by opportunities for prayer at different times during the day through either spontaneous prayer as heard during the inspection when a Reception child gave thanks for food, or through written prayers. The school has plans to create further opportunities for personal prayer. Children have begun to plan and lead acts of worship which they say they enjoy, both those leading and those participating. All staff and children attend, with opportunity for lunch time staff to join immediately after lunch each month. This ensures that the teaching of values can be understood, shared and acted on by all staff. A member of the lunch time staff described how she refers to known values such as respect and forgiveness to enable

children to work out solutions to their problems. Children have an understanding of Anglican faith and practice through participating in key festivals, sometimes in church. They have a real appreciation of prayer and a growing understanding of set prayers such as the Lord's prayer. The school and church have worked very effectively together and since the last inspection have found further opportunities for worship in the church such as the Reception welcome service and the Year 4 leavers service.

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

The Head teacher, school leaders and governors have a clear commitment to the Christian foundation of the school. This is translated into the day to day life of the school through a rapidly growing understanding of the practical application of Christian values. It is clear that these are central to every aspect of school life and decision making at all levels. Governors, staff and parents are full of praise for the dynamic leadership of the Head teacher, who, building on the foundations set prior to the previous inspection, has continued to lead the school from strength to strength in making 'living God's love' accessible to those of all faiths and none. School leaders know their school well and their self evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas for development. Through very effective communication, parents have a growing understanding of the importance of values learned and experienced by children in school. A monthly values task set by each class in turn enables parents to affirm their child's understanding such as 'persevering' with homework. Parents also speak of how this can inspire other behaviour at home. Staff work well together, agreeing and supporting values, and have developed their own code of conduct emphasising the importance of practising and modelling values day by day. The Head teacher ensures that governors are informed about church school developments through regular reports Newsletters keep parents well informed and include how the current value can be supported, along with invitations to 'golden' assembly where children are presented with values certificates. The school enjoys excellent relationships with parents. They are very appreciative of the way the school supports both academic and personal development as described by one parent: 'the Christian values they teach and demonstrate in the school are giving my child an excellent foundation in what it means to respect, love and care for those outside your family'. Succession planning as a church school is well supported through access for senior leaders and governors to appropriate training. Diocesan training has further supported the staff and governors in the development of church school initiatives.

The Church and school partnership is very strong and the vicar is fully supportive of the Head teacher and members of the school community, and is able to offer pastoral support. There are many opportunities to serve the local community, and good relationships with other churches and organisations such as the Kings Arms Church.