



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Cranfield VC Lower School**  
**Court Road, Cranfield, Bedford MK43 0DR**

**Diocese of St Albans**



<b>LA:</b>	<b>Bedfordshire</b>
<b>SIAS Inspection:</b>	<b>14 March 2007</b>
<b>Previous S23 Inspection:</b>	<b>4&amp;5 March 2003</b>
<b>URN:</b>	<b>109598</b>
<b>Headteacher:</b>	<b>Mrs Barabara Stubbings</b>
<b>SIAS Inspector Name:</b>	<b>Bob Hopcraft</b>
<b>SIAS Inspector No:</b>	<b>484</b>

### **School Context**

Cranfield VC Lower School is larger than average lower school and has lower than average levels of pupils with disabilities or learning difficulties. Most pupils are of White British heritage; however, the school caters for a significant number of pupils from different countries whose parents come to study at the nearby university. These pupils arrive at different times of the year and as a consequence the proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the year is above the national average.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cranfield VC Lower School as a Church of England school are Good**

Cranfield VC Lower School is a good Church school, with many strengths of which it can be justly proud. The headteacher and senior staff play a key role in promoting the school's Christian vision. The school has strong and growing links with the Church and the local community and has particularly good systems for ensuring that that all staff and pupils feel cared for and valued.

### **Established strengths**

- The clear vision of the headteacher and senior staff for the school as a Church school
- The good relationships between staff and pupils at all levels
- The school council, which provides an effective voice for pupils within the school
- The school's systems for ensuring that all pupils are made to feel welcome and secure at whatever time of year they enter the school;
- The strong relationship between the school, the parish and the local community

### **Focus for development**

- Develop systems for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of collective worship
- Provide more opportunities for parents to be involved in the school's acts of collective worship
- Develop more formal systems for assessing and evaluating the school's effectiveness as a Church school and involve all stakeholders in this

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

This is because all pupils feel valued and special and this reflects the strong Christian values which underpin the school's ethos. Pupils are treated and treat one another with respect and they understand the needs of others well. This is reflected in the views of one parent, who was moved to write of "...the strong Christian ethos that is fostered there, leading to good moral behaviour on the part of pupils and teachers". Pupils enjoy coming to school and demonstrate a confident approach to life. Staff know pupils well and the personal development of each child is central to the school's ethos. Pupils are spiritually aware and opportunities are provided throughout the day for quiet reflection. Learners are encouraged to empathise with those from other cultures and this in turn nourishes their own cultural and social development. The school supports those of other faiths well and celebrates diversity in a very positive way, promoting similarities, rather than differences. Good relationships are evident at all levels, supported by the school's behaviour policy, which is understood by all. The atmosphere within the school is one of collaboration and mutual respect. Staff speak of feeling very much part of a team and pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the school's development through the very effective school council. Considerable improvements have been made in the school environment since the last Section 23 inspection and accommodation is much improved. Displays and resources are used positively to promote spirituality and to encourage thought about and for others. An example of this is the interactive display reflecting the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) project in the hall. Evidence of the school's Christian character is clear throughout the buildings and the wooden cross and illuminated copy of the Lords Prayer in the hall provide a strong focal point.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school and underpins its Christian character. Acts of worship are stimulating and pupils are actively involved in them, for example in acting out the story of the *Lost Sheep*. Pupils are clear that worship is a time for quiet reflection and behave in an appropriate and responsive manner. Pupils speak very positively about worship and can speak articulately about previous acts of worship which have had a particular impact on them. There is a strong emphasis on prayer and prayers are sometimes led by the children. Pupils know the Lords Prayer and can talk about its place in the Christian heritage and its meaning. Singing is outstanding and pupils participate in songs with great enthusiasm. Acts of worship are clearly planned by the Worship Co-ordinator, using guidance from the Diocese of St Albans, and use of the SEAL materials provides a strong basis for a developing understanding of a range of values. All teaching staff participate in and lead acts of worship. However, the effectiveness of collective worship is not evaluated in any formal way and there is no clear planned development for collective worship within the school's overall development plan. Parents would like more opportunities to be involved in collective worship and the school is aware of this. The clergy and ministers from other denominations regularly lead collective worship and pupils visit the local Church for worship on agreed occasions. Worship is also regularly led by a local Bible Study group, called *Open the Book* and pupils reflect on these visits with enthusiasm and interest. The school is working to extend the number of times worship takes place in the Church during the year and all were keen to talk about the moving experience of last year's Christmas festival of carols and readings, led by pupils from years 3 and 4.

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

The headteacher and key staff work hard to promote the school's Christian vision and do this successfully. The school's Christian foundation is evident in all public documentation and in displays throughout the school. Foundation governors support this and lead other governors in considering the school's distinctive Christian character. There are strong pastoral links between the parish and the school and the rector plays an active role on the governing body. While the school has a range of informal systems for promoting its Christian character and has completed a self-evaluation of its effectiveness as a Church school, these are currently not formalised or used in a systematic way to consider future strategic development of the school's Christian character. All staff are clear that Cranfield is a Church school and support its ethos and the Collective Worship Co-ordinator regularly attends courses to develop her skills, feeding ideas back to staff appropriately. Parents, too, speak positively of the school and understand its Christian status and character and their views are sought informally on a range of issues. The school has very strong links with the parish and local community and at times provides a focus for local events, such as the Summer Fete and Christmas Bazaar. Local clergy play an active and supportive role in the school and regular involvement by ministers and groups from other denominations and faiths are a strong feature of the school's programme for teaching and learning.

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