



**Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools
Holywell Church of England Middle School
Red Lion Close, Cranfield, Bedford MK43 0JA**



Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 2nd & 3rd June 2008
Previous S23 Inspection: November 2004
URN: 109712
Acting Headteachers: Claire McMaster and David Hall
SIAS Inspector Name: Lyn Field
SIAS Inspector No: 151

School Context

The school mainly serves families of mixed backgrounds from the villages of Cranfield and Wootton. The clergy from these churches support the school. A significant number of pupils are from other countries while their parents study at Cranfield University. When pupils start school their attainment is above average and the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holywell as a Church of England school are satisfactory

The care and commitment of the staff has created a community where respect and trust characterise relationships. Pupils show a genuine concern for each other and enjoy all aspects of their learning. The acting headteachers have gained an accurate picture of how to build on the school's strengths and the governors have a refreshed understanding of its Christian ethos. The school has reached a key point in its development and has the capacity to move rapidly forward as an effective church school.

Established strengths

- Pupils who are keen to learn and show respect for each other
- The quality of pastoral care that enables all pupils to do their best
- The contribution RE makes to the spiritual development of pupils
- The role all staff and pupils play in the leadership of worship

Focus for development

- To develop a clear approach to assessment in RE recognising the distinctive nature of the subject
- To develop ways of assessing how the Christian ethos contributes to pupils' achievement
- To evaluate the impact of worship and use the outcomes to identify training opportunities for staff and pupils.

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

Pupils are highly motivated and exceptionally enthusiastic about what they do in school. The school's care of pupils works well because it places special emphasis on what individual pupils need at particular points in their development. The willingness of some pupils to acknowledge the help they need is indicative of the openness and honesty that is a feature of the good relationships in the school. For example, the lunchtime club called the 'Zone' provides them with the space and support to address issues that affect how well they can concentrate on learning. Pupils' views are taken very seriously and they are happy to talk openly about faith or ethical issues. There is common agreement that respect, co-operation and humility are core values of the school and lived out in its daily life. These are consistently reinforced in lessons, worship and in the extra activities the school organises. 'Acting Up' is a club for Year 7 and 8 pupils that uses drama to explore moral issues in a Christian context. A typical comment from parents is that the Christian values of the school give pupils direction in a mixed up world. The spiritual development of pupils is good even though the school has yet to monitor this aspect of its work. Displays for RE include reflective and challenging questions that are relevant to anyone working in the room but this good practice is not common to all subject areas.

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

Pupils of all faith backgrounds make good use of the regular times to reflect and pray together. The themes for worship are relevant to pupils' lives and promote the spiritual and moral values of the school. Pupils suggest this has an effect on how people treat each other and contributes to the lack of bullying in the school. The majority of parents value the role worship plays in the school and would welcome some opportunities to attend. All teachers and pupils take a turn in leading worship. The school recognises that it has not made the most of their skills to develop the range of worship in the school. This is because there is not sufficient monitoring to identify exactly where improvement is needed. The records that are kept focus on what happens in worship rather than evaluating what pupils gain from it. Themes are selected on a weekly basis and the lack of longer term planning means there is no guidance for staff in creating a broad and balanced experience for pupils. Worship that takes place in form or year groups makes a lasting impression on pupils. They explain that in these smaller groups, everyone participates in some way and the style is more interactive. The staff provide strong support for worship. For example, in Year 5, all staff involved with these classes attend alongside the pupils. This demonstrates the strength of teamwork and teachers' commitment to the importance of worship in the day. They are excellent role models and a quiet and reflective atmosphere is created in spite of the very cramped conditions.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Teachers are well organised and their high expectations for behaviour ensure pupils respond to the good pace of lessons and maintain their concentration throughout. Activities are carefully structured and lead pupils step by step to achieve the objectives for the lesson. They are most successful where teachers have a clear idea of pupils' previous knowledge and adjust their planning accordingly. The tasks that teachers set for the whole class are not always appropriate for groups of different abilities. It is made clear to pupils, however, how their responses can demonstrate different levels of attainment. For example, Year 5 pupils understood how being able to suggest contemporary roles for the characters in the story of the good Samaritan might raise the standard of their work. The systems for assessment are currently being developed to mirror those used in ICT. At this stage it is not clear how well they track the broader range of skills learned in RE and there is not a consistent picture of how well pupils make progress across the school. The subject is generally taught by non-specialists and there have been significant changes in the last year. The temporary head of department has accurately identified the need to introduce formal systems for moderating work and sharing good practice. In spite of this the current staff team are to be congratulated for their enthusiasm and commitment to the subject. The positive attitudes of pupils have been maintained and they constantly initiate debate by raising relevant and perceptive issues. Pupils are unanimous in their view that the subject has a key place in the school because they learn how to respect other opinions. This is because teachers set clear ground rules for acknowledging confidentiality and showing sensitivity in discussions. Pupils of other faiths are valued for their 'expert' knowledge and feel that they gain a new perspective on their own beliefs.

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

The Christian ethos is understood by the whole community to be the basis of the strong pastoral care in the school. The majority of parents are positive about the difference it makes and like the balance in the school's attention to both academic and spiritual development. The staff work as an effective team to ensure that the care of pupils helps them to work more effectively in lessons. They are supported by local clergy who contribute regularly to worship and Christian clubs. The governors have recently appointed a new headteacher and reviewed the criteria by which pupils are admitted to the school. These processes have challenged them to articulate what implications the Christian ethos has for the running of the school. They recognise the need to take responsibility, alongside the senior staff, in assessing how well Christian values contribute to the achievement of pupils. The survey of how parents and pupils view the school has been initiated by the two acting headteachers. It is part of a highly effective review they have carried out of the school's effectiveness as a church school. They have gained a good understanding of its strengths and have accurately identified areas where the school needs to improve. Limited use has been made of the previous inspection report because aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness are not regularly evaluated and fed into the school's overall development planning.