



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report



**Ashton St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School
Leighton Court, Dunstable LU61EW**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 20th January, 2009
Previous S23 Inspection: 25th January 2006
URN: 109703
Headteacher: Mrs Shirley McGinty
SIAS Inspector Name: Mrs Mel Adams
SIAS Inspector No: 58

School Context

Ashton St Peter's is a one form entry first school whose foundation is with the Priory Church of St Peter's, along with other churches from the team ministry in Dunstable. The school is over subscribed and children travel from a wide area including Luton. Changes in recent years include the appointment of a new Headteacher in 2006 and relocation to a new site and buildings in the same year. Achievement throughout the school is good and above national averages by the end of Key Stage 1.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ashton St Peter's as a Church of England Lower School are good.

Ashton St Peter's is a good church of England school in which an understanding of Christian values is beginning to underpin the Christian ethos and character. In keeping with the school's expressed vision, this enables children of all ages to develop well academically, spiritually, socially and morally in a safe and happy environment.

Established strengths

- The leadership, commitment and drive of the Headteacher in the development of the distinctive Christian character of the school
- The extent to which Christian values permeate the daily life of the school, and their contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the children
- The importance of worship including both collective worship and other opportunities for prayer

Focus for development

- To further raise standards in Religious Education by developing teaching and learning of different faiths
- To further improve the experience of Collective worship through monitoring
- To develop the strategic role of the governing body in Church school improvement through monitoring and evaluation

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

Children enjoy school, say they work hard and have good teachers. They are aware of good structures in the school such as 'worry boxes' and class prayer tables where they can find help spiritually and through the school council, along with the accessibility of the Headteacher, 'who will help us if we're down'. Children are able to speak of how Christian values such as love, respect, peace, co-operation and appreciation help them in their conduct and behaviour. One child wrote, 'Values help us to learn about God and live as he wants. It is important to belong and feel safe.' These values, evident throughout the school are foundational to a setting in which children are able to develop well spiritually and morally. Consequently, behaviour is very good, and staff and children work well together. Children are able to express their opinions and ideas and the developing culture of 'big questions' helps them to feel confident to take risks, knowing they will be respected by staff and peers. Parents describe how children use their understanding of values in the care they show for each other, within the school, and this is also observed at home. Children are very proud of their school and are able to identify how displays such as the values tree and artefacts such as the large cross in the hall help them to appreciate the school as a church school. Displays celebrating children's learning in Religious Education are interactive, with stimulating questions to opportunities for developing religious thinking and understanding, such as the question about the wise men, 'Do you think meeting Jesus changed them?'

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

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. Its importance is evident not only from the daily collective worship, but the way in which worship is understood to extend throughout the day with opportunities for class prayers and prayer tables in the classroom which children use and appreciate. In daily worship, children listen well showing awareness from children of all ages that this is a special time. Responses indicate good spiritual development through an understanding of Christian values and their relevance to their own lives. One child commented, 'We learn about Jesus and what he wants you to do then good things happen'. Reflection with a focus on a candle provides children with an opportunity for thinking. Prayers and good singing further enhance the sense of worship. Coherence with Religious Education is evident exemplified by a child relating understanding gained in worship to forgiveness in a parable. Clergy from the parish lead worship in school fortnightly and the school visits the Priory church twice a term for worship. Governors are aware of the impact of collective worship and values on the development of the ethos of the school and on children, but are not yet involved in monitoring or evaluation. Children have an understanding of Anglican faith and practice through a well planned weekly schedule, including prayers, festivals and hymns. They appreciate the school's saint, St Peter and his role as a founder of the Christian faith, eloquently celebrated in the school crossed keys logo.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Religious Education is good because children demonstrate a good understanding of religious concepts and can make a link between these and their own experience. This was demonstrated in a Year 2 lesson where children's thinking about the character and values of a friend being more important than their appearance led them to thinking about how it doesn't really matter if we don't know what God looks like. Recent developments in learning about different religions are widening the understanding of religious practice, but lessons do not yet provide opportunities to appreciate different faith perspectives. Where learning objectives are generic, learning outcomes can lack clarity, limiting the development of children's understanding. Recorded learning can be good where it provides for open ended tasks, or writing in different genre, enabling children to show both knowledge and understanding. Writing a play script about the visit of the Magi enabled a child to demonstrate good religious understanding by saying, 'Herod was jealous of God's precious gift which he had given to the world'. Some worksheet activities do not allow for this good level of recording. Staff have worked well together to develop Religious Education and are committed to further developing good learning and teaching. Children are positive about Religious Education and say that without it they would not know about God and Jesus and how to look after each other. Religious Education contributes well to the Christian ethos and worship, and the values which underpin the school are becoming more evident in learning and teaching. The leadership within the school, including the RE co-ordinator, are ensuring good developments in RE, and are beginning to measure the impact through monitoring learning and teaching, including children's responses. Governors are fully supportive of developments but currently are not monitoring Religious Education.

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

The passionate commitment and leadership of the Headteacher is strategic in driving forward the vision for the development of the school as a church school. This vision, which encourages children to love and respect each other and to love God is shared by staff and governors and it is evident in documentation such as the prospectus. Church school self evaluation has begun and indicates that leadership have a clear view of how to improve with clear targets for future developments. Governors have been involved in discussions but have yet to be involved in the process of evaluation. Quality of provision in Religious Education and Collective Worship have improved through distributive leadership, including the RE co-ordinator who is supporting staff and securing good standards through monitoring learning and teaching. Staff are supportive of developments and are committed to professional development to further raise standards. Feedback from parents and carers, staff and children is taken into account in planning for developments including reviewing the number of visits to the church for worship and including visitors from different denominations to lead worship. There are growing links with the local community, and other local churches including the Baptist church and Salvation Army. Parents are very supportive, one parent writing, 'Christian values and caring are very high on the agenda which makes this school my only choice for my children'.