



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Manshead Church of England Voluntary Aided Upper School
Dunstable Road, Caddington, Luton LU1 4BB**

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	1 – 2 December 2008
Previous S23 Inspection:	January 2006
URN:	109705
Headteacher:	Mr Jim Parker
SIAS Inspector Name:	Mrs Catherine Large
SIAS Inspector No:	482

Context

Manshead Upper School is a 13-18 mixed comprehensive school of 1090 students about a quarter of whom are in the sixth form. It is located on a spacious site on the outskirts of Dunstable in Bedfordshire. It draws most of its students from three local Middle Schools. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below national averages. Most students come from white British backgrounds and others from a broad range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students from Christian backgrounds is about 40%. The school has had specialist status in mathematics and science since 2004 and has recently opened a unit for students with autism. A new headteacher took up post in September 2006.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Manshead School as a Church of England school are satisfactory.

The school has recently taken some steps to strengthen its distinctiveness as a church school, encouraged by a group from the governing body. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, priority has appropriately been given to improving the progress and achievement of students. Early signs are that this may be having some positive effects. There are some good features emerging, through improved links with local churches. There is not a clear vision, shared by all stakeholders, of what it means to be a community school with a Christian ethos.

Established strengths

- The drive to raise standards and improve progress for all students;
- The high standards in Advanced Level religious education;
- The good quality of relationships between most staff and students and between the students themselves;
- The work of the Christian Ethos group drawn from staff and governors;
- The enthusiasm and commitment of the Christian Union students.

Focus for development

- To implement a clear strategy for improving the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school, which is shared and owned by all stakeholders;
- To improve the quantity, quality and range of worship experiences and opportunities;
- To continue to develop and strengthen links with local Christian communities

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, makes satisfactory provision for all its learners

Since the last inspection, the school has set out four shared values which underpin the work and life of the school. These are: respect; responsibility; faith and compassion. They are reinforced through displays, collective worship and in Learning Guide times. Most students are aware of them, understand what they mean and believe that in general, they are put into practice in the life of the school. Most students feel valued and respected and supported in their work. They recognise the caring ethos and the good relationships that exist between students and staff and between students themselves. They have no concerns about bullying or racism. The new system of red and green cards, which is the basis for behaviour policy, appears to be effective in the experience of some students. However, a significant number express doubts about the consistency of the system's application. In particular, they feel that the opportunity to 'make things right' by the receiving of a green card is not working well and that this is unfair. Pastoral care in the school is well planned and there are systems in place for students to receive care and guidance from staff working with teams of external agencies on aspects of personal education such as drugs, crime, alcohol and sexual relationships. The new system of small mixed age groups in Years 9-11 working with Learning Guides is appreciated by the younger students particularly and, though in early stages, appears to be offering good support for students' academic and pastoral development. Concern about the inconsistency of marking and feedback was expressed by some students and the school recognises that this is an area to be addressed. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, educational and social activities. The new College structure contributes well to these areas. Curriculum initiatives provide students with good enrichment and enterprise activities. There is an active and worthwhile charity programme. Students have the opportunity to participate in specific Christian activities organised by the Christian Union. This group of about thirty students is committed and well organised, holding regular prayer meetings and study times. At the last inspection they regretted that adults in the school did not support them by their presence. This remains the case although the school does now have the services of a local Christian youth worker who meets with them. Apart from the Christian Union and religious education lessons, there are few other opportunities for students to follow or explore matters of faith. The spiritual dimension of the general curriculum is not planned or monitored. There is no space set aside in the school for reflection or prayer. Some older students expressed the need for an increase in opportunities for counselling in the school. The school still benefits from a donated award for the student who most promotes the Christian ethos of the school. The entrance to the school is attractive and interesting and makes the school's Christian character explicit. This has improved since the last inspection and now has a distinctive picture, drawn by a student, which identifies the Christian character of the school and the local churches.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has retained its five annual whole school acts of worship relating to key Christian festivals and remembrance and end of school year. These do include specific elements of worship and inputs from local clergy. As far as students are concerned, these are the main and significant times when they feel the school identifies with its Christian character. They do recognise that individual leaders sometimes include opportunities for prayer and reflection but this does not occur regularly. During the inspection, a good assembly held the attention of the students who were attentive to the theme which made clear links to the experience of Christians in sport and encouraged students to make the most of their personal gifts. However, overall, there has been no improvement since the last inspection when it was an area for development. Students do meet weekly for assembly in mixed age College groupings and whilst some leaders may take a worthwhile theme, there is no evidence that students have opportunities to respond or participate. The school acknowledges that currently there is no overview of planning and no monitoring and evaluation of what takes place or its impact on students. There has been no whole school exploration of how an appropriate pattern and style of worship in a church school can be offered to students. However, the very recent appointment of a part - time church youth worker to support the school in this area is a positive development which, in time, should bring improvement.

The effectiveness of religious education is satisfactory.

There have been significant changes in staffing in the religious education department since the last inspection. The school has experienced real difficulties in recruitment. This has led to a number of non-specialists teaching the subject and has put increasing pressure on the acting head of department. Standards in religious education at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are in line with average expectations of the Agreed Syllabus and national GCSE results. Students make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Those students who follow the Advanced Level courses make good progress and results for this small group are above average. The school is committed to providing religious education for all its students in Years 9-11. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a GCSE examination route, either the Short or the Full course. Attitudes vary across groups and whilst most are positive, there is a significant minority who are not motivated and whose achievement is unsatisfactory. The school recognises this and is changing the course to better reflect the interests and relevance of the topics covered. There are significant issues surrounding the achievement of students following the Full Course. Chief amongst these issues is the significant lack of curriculum time allocated and the nature of the course itself. The school is rightly considering courses of action to remedy this situation. At the last inspection, all students in the sixth form followed a General Studies course which included elements of religious education. This is no longer the case and so the school is not fully meeting its statutory requirements. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to good. It is particularly good in the Advanced Level courses where teacher knowledge is very good and relationships with students are outstanding. Students value the support they receive. Currently there is some inconsistency in the marking of students' work, in the approach taken to meeting the needs of learners of different abilities and in the use made of level descriptors with Year 9 students to help them know what to do to improve. Given the staffing difficulties currently experienced by the acting head of department, the leadership and management of the department is good. It is well supported by the head of faculty. Religious education continues to make a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. All courses contribute well to students' understanding of Christian faith and practice as well as helping them to gain an awareness of key elements of some other world faiths.

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

Priorities for the school since the last inspection have been centred round the need to improve the achievement of students and the progress they make as they move through the school. A number of key initiatives have been put in place to put learning first. This has been an appropriate priority. The new structure of mixed age groups with Learning Guides is part of the strategy to achieve these goals which appears to be effective at this early stage. At the time of the last inspection, there was little clear strategic planning for the development of the Christian ethos of the school. Foundation governors played little part in challenging the school over aspects of its Christian status. This is now changing. A sub-group of the Governing Body, the Christian ethos group, has been established and is actively seeking to move the school forward. In consequence, a part – time Youth worker from a local church has recently been appointed to support the school and early indications are that this will be very beneficial. The school's Christian foundation is clear in the symbols and artwork in the main entrance. The website makes an explicit reference, displaying a daily Bible verse. The prospectus also makes the Christian status clear. There are strong partnerships with many external agencies and educational providers. Links with local Christian communities are slowly improving. The school is committed to strengthening these relationships. This has the potential to move the school forward in developing its distinctiveness. However, the overwhelming response from students reflects uncertainty about the school's Christian status and the impact this has on their experience. Despite the positive moves, there is still not a clear vision shared and owned by all stakeholders, about what it means for Manshead to be a Church of England school.