



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Dunton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School
High Street, Dunton, Biggleswade SG18 8RN**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 3 February 2010
Previous S48 Inspection: 18 January 2007
URN: 109599
Headteacher: Mrs Heather Curry
SIAS Inspector Name: Ms Chris Westgarth
SIAS Inspector No: 44

School Context

Dunton Lower School is a small voluntary controlled village school (57 on roll). Nearly all pupils are from white British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. The school is in 'soft' federation with another local school. The headteacher shares her time between the two schools.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dunton VC Lower School as a Church of England school are outstanding

Dunton school is at the heart of the community and provides an outstanding education which is informed by Christian values – this has a significant impact on pupils' learning and personal development.

Established strengths

- The outstanding personal development and pastoral care of all pupils
- The strong Christian ethos which underpins everything the school does
- The excellent strong partnership between school, church and community

Focus for development

- Develop a monitoring system for Collective Worship to include the thoughts and views of pupils
- Provide opportunities for pupils to plan and lead Collective Worship

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

Christian values are at the heart of this school and underpin everything it does. All pupils receive high quality learning experiences in a calm and peaceful setting. Relationships across the whole school are outstanding. All pupils feel valued and included in decision making processes. All staff act as role models for pupils and give full support to the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and know who to go to if they have a problem. The school has worked hard to lessen the impact of extremely limited space – however this continues to be an area for concern. Pupils are actively involved with a number of charitable initiatives and show a real concern for people in need. There is a strong family feel within the school and older pupils readily support younger ones.

Community cohesion is strong and enhanced by the *Connecting Classrooms Project* and increasing links with schools internationally. This is made more meaningful by the travels of ‘the animals’ and close links through ICT. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about Mr Brock, the badger’s trip to Antarctica. They have a sound knowledge of other faiths and particularly enjoyed their recent ‘Faith Tour’. The whole school environment is clean, tidy and well cared for, thus reinforcing the Christian ethos of care and respect for the surroundings and the world we live in. Lunchtimes are calm and orderly with a good family atmosphere. The school has made creative use of limited space to provide areas for reflection (a focus for development in the previous s48 report) but with no entrance hall, no corridors and a very small hall this has proved difficult. However a new quiet area in the playground has been created. Pupils are encouraged to reflect at various times of the day and prayer permeates the life of the school. Pupils eagerly write their own prayers which are placed in the prayer box. Parents comment positively about the links between Church and School and the Christian ethos.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship occupies an important place in the life of the school. The recently appointed incumbent is having a positive influence and the effect of his role in promoting the worship life of the school is excellent. Pupils speak enthusiastically about his involvement in the life of the school and their visits to the church for services. Pupil participation in worship is good and there is an excellent balance of song, reflection, music, creative activity and prayer. Pupils demonstrate a strong knowledge of values and stories from the Old and New Testaments. Simple liturgical responses are used. Worship is well planned and delivered, although monitoring and evaluation tends to be informal. The school could benefit from the inclusion of pupils’ thoughts on what they have learnt during worship as a useful monitoring tool. In the observed act of worship, the theme was thankfulness and the New Testament story of the 10 lepers was used effectively with pupil involvement and good use of questioning. This was well linked with being thankful in every day life and the work of the Leprosy Mission today.

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

A strength of Dunton school is partnership, inclusion and the Christian ethos. Governors are effective in monitoring the distinctive Christian character of the school and have robust systems in place. The 5 year strategic plan will be a working document that is beneficial for the journey of excellence. School leaders and Governors have an excellent understanding of their school and the wider community – this is demonstrated through a clear vision based on a strong set of Christian values which permeate across the whole school life. Foundation Governors take their role seriously and are involved in the monitoring of the distinctive Christian character of the school. The school is in ‘soft’ federation with another local school and as such there is excellent collaboration between both schools and a ‘shared partnership’ of ideas.

The headteacher and senior teacher play a pivotal role in this school’s journey along the road of excellence.