



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Dunton VC Lower School
High Street, Dunton, Biggleswade SG18 8RN

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	Thursday 18th January 2007
Previous S23 Inspection:	w/c 2nd July 2001
URN:	109599
Headteacher:	Mrs Heather Curry
SIAS Inspector Name:	Mr C Anstey
SIAS Inspector No:	71

School Context

Dunton Lower School is a small voluntary controlled village school. Nearly all pupils come from white British backgrounds and come to school with skills which are generally higher than most children of their age. Pupils attend from Reception age to Year 4. The school is federated with another local school. The headteacher shares her time between the two.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dunton VC Lower School as a Church of England school are good with many outstanding features.

Dunton VC Lower School is a good church school with many outstanding features. It is very much valued by its local community. The ethos of care and respect is built upon strong Christian principles and the commitment of the head teacher, staff, governors and parents.

Established strengths

- Strong Christian principles which underpin all aspects of the school's work.
- The outstanding personal development and pastoral care of the pupils.
- The calm, caring Christian environment provided by the Headteacher and all the staff.

Focus for development

- To provide a small area in each classroom for contemplation and reflection focussing on Christian values.
- To draw out the spiritual meaning more from assembly stories and give pupils time to reflect upon it.
- To monitor the Christian ethos and practice in school to ensure that it is sustained through any times of change.

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

Pupils feel very well cared for and valued within the school. Pupils, staff and parents explain that it feels like a large family. The curriculum includes opportunities to learn about all major religions in a sympathetic manner. Christian principles guide the way that pupils care for each other, the way that the staff care for them, how they are taught to resolve conflict and the importance that they give to worship. The Christian ethos of the school is reflected clearly in the spiritual, moral and social development of the school.

Pupils make good progress, the curriculum is well targeted at pupils' individual needs and standards of behaviour are extremely good. Very good attention is given to developing pupils' independence and confidence across the school.

The classrooms, provide a lively and interesting learning environment. Displays are bright and interesting, and give excellent support to learning particularly RE. Staff work very hard to make sure that the short-comings of the fabric of the main hall do not reduce the impact of collective worship and other whole school activities.

There are Christian signs, symbols and displays around the school. The classrooms could benefit from designating a small area for reflection and contemplation.

The school has good links with the local church. Both the vicar and the headteacher are keen that the school should make more use of the church for services and as a learning resource.

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

Staff work hard to provide a calm, caring worshipping experience. The pupils are happy to tell you how much they enjoy acts of worship. They take an active part in collective worship by responding to questions, singing enthusiastically, helping with the organisation and playing instruments alongside the piano. They also demonstrate their understanding of its significance by coming in calmly, sitting quietly and listening attentively.

Assemblies are taken by the headteacher, a range of other teachers, the vicar once a week and once a month the local Baptist minister.

There is a programme of clearly displayed assembly themes which are planned to give the pupils a good understanding of the Christian faith and practice as well as an understanding of the world and its people.

The school is currently considering how to develop the use of prayers in assembly. Pupils like reading prayers and may in future be encouraged to write them. A story was used to illustrate the life and work of Jesus. The spiritual meaning behind the story could have been further explored and the pupils given a short time to reflect upon their learning.

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

The headteacher, the staff and the governors promote a calm, caring, Christian environment for the pupils. The headteacher articulates a clear Christian vision for the school. This vision is communicated clearly to staff so that they feel confident in putting it into practice.

Christian values and beliefs imbue all that goes on in the school whilst respecting children and adults from other faiths and no faith. The school's Christian purpose is well thought out, understood and appreciated by parents, strongly supported by all members of the school staff and evident in practice in all aspects of the school's work. Pupils and parents speak very highly of the school's Christian ethos, the commitment of the staff to all individuals and the high quality of education provided. Parents appreciate the way that the Christian teaching that their children receive at school percolates through into home-life.

Governors play an important part in supporting and monitoring the standards in the school. They could take further steps to improve their monitoring and evaluation processes for the schools self-evaluation as a church school.