



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**St Leonard's, Heath and Reach, Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School
Thrift Road, Heath and Reach, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 0AX**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 13 December 2006
Previous S23 Inspection: 1 & 2 May 2001
URN: 109618
Headteacher: Mrs Jan Abrams
SIAS Inspector Name: Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No:

School Context

St Leonard's is a smaller than average lower school, which takes most of its pupils from the village of Heath and Reach and the surrounding community. On entry, pupils' abilities are generally below those expected for their age. The school is part of a local learning community of schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Leonard's VA Lower School as a Church of England school are good

St Leonard's is a good Church school, with some outstanding features. It is particularly effective in promoting its Christian character and has very strong links with the Church and local community. Its Christian foundation is an important part of its ethos and permeates all aspects of its daily life. The vision and leadership of the headteacher have played an important role in this, since her appointment two years ago. The strong commitment to values education and an understanding of other cultures are central to the life of the school.

Established strengths

- The clear vision of the headteacher for the school as a Christian community;
- Outstanding relationships at all levels;
- The very effective relationship with St Leonard's Church and the local community;
- The quality of and commitment to values education;
- The opportunities provided for developing an understanding of other cultures.

Focus for development

- To encourage more able pupils to reach the standards of which they are capable in RE, through the further development of systems for tracking their progress and the full implementation of the new Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus;
- To develop a system for the formal evaluation of the quality of collective worship;
- To develop further the school's self-evaluation as a church school, so that it is sharper and more rigorous and supports the school in identifying strengths and areas for development.

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

This is because all pupils are made to feel valued and special and all take part in a wide range of communal events. The school celebrates its Christian foundation at every opportunity and Christian values lie at the heart of its daily life. This is strongly reflected in the views of the community, encouraging one parent to write "*I like the way in which Christian values are intrinsic to the everyday life of the school and are strongly reflected in its ethos*". As a result, pupils' levels of self esteem, maturity and confidence are high. Pupils develop good spiritual awareness and have a strong sense of values, which is underpinned by the school's values education programme. All are aware that it is a Church school and that the Christian values of love, tolerance and justice are important. Relationships within the school are outstanding at all levels and pupils are closely involved in agreeing rules for good behaviour. The School Council is particularly effective and there is a strong element of peer support between pupils. The school celebrates its Christian foundation through displays and promotes a particularly bright and stimulating environment. Symbols of the Christian faith are evident in many parts of the building.

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

Worship is an important part of the school day. Pupils play an active part in worship and sing outstandingly well. The school hall provides a particularly stimulating environment for worship, with many symbols of the Christian faith used as a focus for worship, including a stained glass window, which celebrates the school's centenary. Worship is planned and a record is kept of themes; some evaluation of its quality takes place, but this is not yet done in any formal way. All pupils and staff have positive attitudes towards worship and pupils talk with enthusiasm about some of the worshipping experiences they have had. Values education is closely woven into the programme for worship and pupils are able to relate this to their everyday lives. Worship is generally well matched to the needs of learners, though sometimes worship can have too many themes running through it, particularly for the youngest pupils. Prayer plays an important part in the life of the school and prayers are said before lunch and at the end of the school day. Many opportunities are provided for quiet reflection, both during worship and at other times during the school day. The school is well supported by local clergy, who lead worship once a week and pupils visit the local Church at agreed times during the year.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

This is because pupils reach expected levels and progress is good. They are enthusiastic about the subject and are particularly knowledgeable about the Christian religion. However, higher attaining pupils do not always reach the levels of religious understanding of which they are capable. The school recognises this and is currently implementing the new Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus, which will encourage more able pupils to reach the higher levels. The subject is well led and managed and the school has begun to monitor pupils' progress in RE. As a result it has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve this subject area. The school currently uses agreed objectives to track progress in RE, but these do not allow more able pupils to be tracked at the higher levels. Teaching is good, because lessons are well planned and learning objectives are clear. Good use is made of ICT and the school has a good range of resources for teaching the subject. Through RE, the school promotes social, moral, spiritual and cultural education outstandingly well and is involved in a range of initiatives to extend pupils' understanding of other cultures. For example, through its involvement in the *Global Learning Communities* project, links are being developed with schools in Ghana.

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

The headteacher provides good leadership and has been instrumental in developing a clear vision for promoting the school's Christian character. As a result, pupils, parents, staff and governors are clear about the school's Christian foundation and all feel part of this developing vision. The school has undertaken self-evaluation as a Church school, but this evaluation is not yet as sharp as it could be. Governors are now more active in challenging the school to promote its distinctively Christian character. Parents' views are sought on a range of issues and they feel that their views are valued and acted upon. The school has outstanding links with the local Church and community. Pupils and their families support school events, for example the particularly well-attended nativity play, and families are attending special Sunday Church services in increasing numbers. Pupils and parents talked with great affection about the recent Toy Service, in which pupils played an active part. The school opens its doors on a monthly basis to senior citizens, who come for lunch and enjoy talking with the children and the opportunity to visit the school, which lies at the heart of village life.