



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools



Raynsford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School
Park Lane, Henlow SG16 6AT

Diocese of St Albans

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| LA: | Bedfordshire |
| SIAS Inspection: | 7th March 2007 |
| Previous S23 Inspection: | February 2002 |
| URN: | 109601 |
| Headteacher: | Sue Phillips |
| SIAS Inspector Name: | Lyn Field |
| SIAS Inspector No: | NS151 |

School Context

This lower school is smaller than average and serves the village of Henlow. Most pupils are White British and the proportion with special educational needs is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Raynsford Lower School as a Church of England school are good

Children give strong support to each other because they see this modelled in the relationships between the adults in their school. They develop a strong sense of justice and value difference and diversity. The headteacher gives clear direction to the school and together with the staff provides a strong sense of community.

Established strengths

- Children show honesty and sensitivity in their relationships
- The partnership of the headteacher and chair of governors is central to the shared vision for the school
- The links made between Collective Worship, Religious Education and Personal and Social Education have a significant impact on spiritual development

Focus for development

- To develop clarity in planning and monitoring spiritual development across the curriculum
- To create a model for monitoring the impact of the school's Christian ethos

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

Children have very positive attitudes to people who are different in any way because they are able to empathise in a whole range of situations. This is the result of what they learn through emotional literacy and from the links teachers make between RE, personal development and collective worship. Children can link Christian values to Bible stories and to their own experience. They firmly believe that everyone has a responsibility to care and they react strongly to any injustice they encounter whether it is contemporary or back in history. The school rewards achievement across all aspects of a child's development and phrases such as 'what's on the inside matters' and 'nobody's a nobody' are part of everyday language. Children are proud of their spiritual awareness and talk openly and honestly about the issues they individually find difficult. Teachers do not specifically plan for spiritual development but take every opportunity to promote this area. It is effective because of the personal commitment of staff in the school and the model of good practice provided by the RE co-ordinator. The overall impact of this is that children develop a sense of being part of something bigger, starting with their own family and extending to the school and the wider church community.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship has a significant impact on spiritual development because themes throughout the year address the whole breadth of human experience. Children are given time to reflect and use it well. They think about how the person in the story might have felt or the way they would respond in the same situation. The key messages are often challenging but the staff are skilful in delivering them at a level with which children can engage. Holocaust Day, for example, was commemorated through the story of Anne Frank and followed up in assemblies later in the week. The moral messages in worship are reference points for children and teachers through the course of the day and this promotes good behaviour and respect for others. Worship is a distinctive time in the day because the headteacher puts careful thought into the detail of worship. The seating arrangement, the visual focus and the choice of music are all imaginative and the children remain fully engaged, often spontaneously adding actions to their singing. Children have a different perception of worship when it takes place in church. They feel it is an important event as a church school but they see it as more of a community exercise and are less aware of being in a special place for worship. This has not been explored as part of evaluation. The personal benefit children derive from worship overall, however, gives them a sense of being part of a committed worshipping community.

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

The headteacher and the chair of governors, who is also church warden, have a shared vision for the school. Christian values are deeply embedded in the leadership and management of the school through their personal commitment. The staff team promote these values because they have been appointed not only as good practitioners but also because of what they can contribute to the ethos of the school. This is the reason for the good relationships in the school and the duty of care shown to adults and children. The balance that is achieved between professional challenge and pastoral care has a direct impact on children achieving their best. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the needs of children in this community as well as the areas of strength and weakness in the school. This means that action is focused and initiatives are only adopted when they will directly contribute to the school's development. Spiritual development is recognised as an

area needing clarification. The governors' evaluation as a church school is too focused on detailed provision and does not have any method for taking in the bigger picture in the way it does in other areas of the school's work. This limits the understanding of exactly how the Christian ethos contributes to the broad achievement of pupils. The vicar has a pastoral presence in the school and children welcome him as a familiar figure. The minister and youth worker from the Methodist church are timetabled to support collective worship, RE and personal development lessons. Children are enthusiastic in their praise of these sessions and develop very positive attitudes to the broader Christian church.

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