

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Hertford St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Calton Avenue  
Hertford  
Herts SG14 2EP

#### Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire  
Date of inspection: 30 May 2012  
Date of last inspection: 25 March 2009  
School's unique reference number: 117397  
Headteacher: Ron Johnson  
Inspector's name and number: Bob Hopcraft (484)

#### School context

St Andrews is a smaller than average primary school, situated on the outskirts of the large town of Hertford. The large majority of pupils live close to the school which is set in the centre of a large estate. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, while the proportion identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's CofE VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

St Andrews is a good church school with many strengths. The strong commitment to Christian values and the excellent provision for collective worship, mean that staff, pupils and their families benefit from a working environment which promotes a strong and tangible Christian ethos.

#### Established strengths

- The strong commitment to Christian values, which are implicit in the daily life of the school and manifest in high quality relationships at all levels;
- Outstanding provision for collective worship, which nourishes and supports the school's strong Christian ethos;
- The very strong pastoral links with the church and the impact that these have on the whole school community.

#### Focus for development

- Provide further opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of other faiths beyond Christianity;
- Promote opportunities for governors and other stakeholder groups to be more closely engaged with the self-evaluation and strategic development of the school *as a Church school*.

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

Christian values lie at the heart of the school's work. While these are implicit in the day-to-day actions of staff and pupils, they are also made explicit through high quality acts of worship and the bright, vibrant learning environment which is characteristic of the school. Pupils and staff say that Christian values are carried beyond the school into the community beyond. As one governor put it: *"This is a school where you can't escape the Christian ethos!"* Because of the high value placed on Christian values, they support pupils' spiritual, moral and social development very well, enabling them to demonstrate a strong knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. An example of this is the way in which older pupils were able to make links between the altar in the church, the Last Supper and Holy Communion. This depth of knowledge, however, is not so evident when discussing other major world religions. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills, preparing them to become responsible citizens in later life.

Good examples of this are developing their roles as sports leaders and setting up and operating the sound equipment during acts of worship. As a result, pupils develop a strong sense of service, which is further extended into the global dimension through fundraising activities and curriculum studies such as the story of Anne Frank. Relationships are strong at all levels. Both pupils and staff model Christian values in these relationships, resulting in a strong family feel and an implicit understanding that everyone is valued for what they bring to the whole. As one parent put it "... as a church school the teachers make every child feel that they are a valued part of the community and are given the skills to make the best of themselves, no matter what their background." This is extended further by the close involvement of the incumbent in the day to day life of the school and his direct engagement in supporting groups of pupils. The many opportunities taken to display the signs and symbols of the Christian faith around the school leave no one in any doubt that St Andrew's is first and foremost a church school.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

*"It's fun and interactive – and it makes learning about RE really fun!"* This comment is typical of the many positive responses from pupils about the acts of worship in which they engage daily. Opportunities abound for pupils to take an active part in proceedings and as a result, worship is a time of great joy and energy which is particularly effectively expressed in song. They are also, however, aware of the important part worship plays in developing their moral and social values, leading one pupil to state that worship "...teaches us how to live our lives better". Staff attend worship regularly and have a clear understanding of its contribution to the school's Christian ethos. Through challenging questions and activities, the themes that run through worship often extend into the school day and at times into home/school tasks. As a result, parents are keenly aware of the impact of the values learned on the everyday lives of their children. There is a strong commitment to prayer and quiet reflection during worship, with many further opportunities to do so throughout the school day, thus supporting pupils' spiritual development particularly well. Worship is planned effectively, with themes linked closely to appropriate Bible texts and songs; the views of pupils are sought regularly on the quality and impact of worship through questionnaires and discussion, ensuring that themes remain relevant and enjoyable. Very strong links with the local church and a range of clergy supports worship effectively and opportunities are provided for pupils to plan and lead worship on a regular basis. Since the last inspection, opportunities for parents to engage in worship have been extended, one particularly poignant example being the Remembrance Day service, which celebrated the life and service of a close family member of a pupil, who recently gave his life in the service of his country.

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

This is because senior leaders and governors show a strong commitment to the promotion of the school's Christian ethos and to the care and support of every child and family. As a result, this is a school where every child really does matter. Since the recent Ofsted inspection, the headteacher has ensured that the shortcomings relating to safeguarding have been swiftly dealt with, enabling school leaders to be sure that every child's safety is secure. The headteacher and his senior staff show a strong commitment to promoting Christian character, which is evident in key documents and implicit in the daily life of the school. This commitment extends out into the wider community, leading one governor to state: *"The school lies at the heart of the community: there is a strong commitment to the whole child and family"*. As a result, parents and other stakeholders are very positive about the school and the impact that its Christian ethos has on their children's lives. While school leaders, including governors, promote the school's Christian ethos effectively, they recognise the need to be more robust in future in monitoring the school's work. The recently completed self-evaluation document provides a good basis for the future development of the school, specifically as a *church school*; however, this has not yet been translated into clear action plans for promoting improvement in areas identified for further development, resulting in a lack of a strategic vision for the future development of the school in these areas.