

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Catherine's C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Haslewood Avenue Hoddesdon EN11 8HT

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection:	2 nd February 2012
Date of last inspection:	23rd April 2009
School's unique reference number:	133773
Headteacher:	Mandy Staiano and Angela Wallis (Acting Headteachers)
Inspector's name and number:	Alan Thornsby 137

School context

St Catherine's is a larger than average primary school in the centre of Hoddesdon. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The previous headteacher left the school in November 2011. The school is being led by two acting headteachers until the appointment of a substantive headteacher in January 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Catherine's as a Church of England school are satisfactory.

St Catherine's has a welcoming and caring ethos that values everyone as a unique individual, with their own talents to develop and share. The life of the school has implicit Christian values at its foundation. Pupils are beginning relate these, their actions and attitudes to the teachings of Jesus. The acting headteachers have a determined vision to fully redevelop the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

Established strengths

- The vision and commitment of the acting headteachers in restoring the distinctive Christian character of the school
- The way the school values and develops each child as an individual, regardless of their abilities or talents
- The relationships between adults and children in school

Focus for development

- The governing body and staff to fully explore and celebrate the distinctive character of the school and explicit Christian values
- Develop an effective policy, planning and evaluation procedures for collective worship
- Ensure foundation governors carry out their statutory roles through effective monitoring and evaluation of the impact of collective worship and the ethos of the school
- Ensure displays reinforce explicit Christian values and give pupils opportunities to reflect on these
- Establish an on-going working relationship with and seek support from the diocese

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

The school has a welcoming caring ethos and sense of community, implicitly based on Christian values. The relationships between adults and children are excellent and help create the enjoyable and effective learning environment where pupils are challenged and supported to achieve their best. Pupils make good progress because they enjoy and respond well to the good quality of teaching. Their behaviour is usually good, reflecting the impact of 'the golden rules' based in the implicit Christian foundation of the school. Some pupils can make the links between the rules and Christian values. Pupils are very aware of the importance of forgiveness and fresh start in maintaining caring relationships, commenting 'if we fall out we sort it out or ask a teacher to help, but they are never judgemental.' They have a developing understanding of the distinctive character of their school with Christian beliefs and a welcome for any faith. Pupils also are keen to talk about faiths and school. They make comments such as 'this is a really good school where teachers are kind and helpful. They give us challenges, so there is always something for everyone.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is good because of the curriculum, the range of sports and music activities and the range of visits experienced by pupils. The church children's worker is a regular visitor in school supporting worship and the pastoral needs of pupils. She is also involved in teaching aspects of religious education (RE) such as the Christian significance of baptism, peace and making Christingles. The school council works to 'make the school a better place in lots of ways.' Their support for a wide range of charities includes a close link with a school in Zambia and helping to fund a building project. The school prayer and golden rules are displayed in each classroom. However, the school does not make sufficient use of displays to reinforce the distinctive Christian character of the school or to make values explicitly Christian.

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

Although worship is central to the spiritual and moral development of pupils, formal planning of themes has only recently been introduced, with a Christian value being explored each term. The theme and a related quote are displayed in the hall. There is currently no policy and evaluation is limited to informal discussion. However, this has led to an increase in the variety of songs used in worship. Most pupils enjoy worship describing it as 'a time we all come together to learn about God and Jesus.' They acknowledge that worship is inclusive of all faiths in 'learning to treat others as you wish to be treated.' The church children's worker leads a weekly assembly that gives everyone the opportunities to develop their understanding of bible stories. Pupils recognise worship as a special time as they are immediately engaged as they enter by joining in singing and actions. The good rapport with leaders engages and reinforces the occasion. Pupils of all ages can relate to the messages of parables by the role-play enacting of simplified versions. This enabled one child to comment 'you can't tell a book by its cover' to explain the story of 'the Good Samaritan'. Pupils enjoy a range of formats for worship, including older pupils regularly leading worship and sharing moral messages. The school has strong links with the clergy, using the church for festival services that recognise the termly value.

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

The acting headteachers have a clear vision and commitment to restoring the Christian distinctness of the school including the recognition and celebration of explicit Christian values. They have a determined and infectious enthusiasm for securely embedded future development. On being appointed they carried out an audit to inform a report relating to the immediate situation. This highlights many shortcomings in both policy and practice of the school. Their self-evaluation as a church school also indicates several areas that need immediate attention. Until now the development points from the previous inspection have not been a priority and have not been successfully addressed. Several members of the governing body are new and have little experience. Although involved in some evaluation, governors have had few opportunities to explore what it means to be a church school and explore explicit values. They currently lack the knowledge to provide sufficient challenge to drive improvement. However, they share commitment of the acting headteachers to quickly engage with and address the current situation and the areas identified for development. Foundation governors maintain links between school and church and have an understanding of the implicit nature of Christian values and maintain the links with church. The departure of the previous headteacher has given governors the opportunity to raise the profile of succession planning. Parents confirm that their children enjoy school statements such as 'this school values each child as an individual and teachers make sure that everyone can reach their potential.' They also comment on the impact of the church school ethos and happy learning environment that nurtures pupils into 'courteous, respectful young people who have empathy for others.'