



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Catherine's Hoddesdon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Haslewood Avenue, Hoddesdon EN11 8HT

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 23rd April 2009
Previous S23 Inspection: 21st June 2006
URN: 133773
Headteacher: Mr Wayne Howsen
SIAS Inspector Name: Mrs Mel Adams
SIAS Inspector No: 58

School Context

The school, working in partnership with the parish church of St Catherine's and St Paul's, serves a diverse community in Hoddesdon. There are 310 pupils, admitted in accordance with Local Authority policy, and places are largely allocated according to sibling criteria and distance from the school. Around 15% of children are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of children with special educational needs is below average, and the number of those with statements is average.

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

St Catherine's is a good church of England school, working well in partnership with the church and this is recognised and fully appreciated within the school community and beyond. The Christian ethos underpins its Christian character enabling children of all ages to develop well academically, spiritually, socially and morally in a safe and happy environment.

Established strengths

- The Head teacher's passionate commitment to inclusion and maximising opportunities for every individual child
- The excellent partnership between the church and the school and the commitment of the vicar to the school community.

Focus for development

- For the Governing Body and school leadership to increase opportunities for spiritual development by identifying agreed Christian values which can be understood and shared.
- To develop monitoring and evaluation of collective worship in order to assess the impact on the school community and to inform further developments.
- To further develop worship through regularly including a range of appropriate songs in assemblies and to develop opportunities for prayer during the school day.
- To ensure that church school self evaluation takes into account the views of all stakeholders and leads to the development of the strategic vision for the school as a church school.

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

The school through its distinctive Christian character is good at meeting the needs of children because they feel safe and valued enjoy coming to school and especially enjoy the range of fun activities, including their termly visits to the church. They are confident to approach staff if they have a difficulty and say they are 'taught to be good and have good manners' by the Head teacher. As a result, behaviour is good and children make good progress. They are able to identify some Christian values such as truth, inspired by the school saint, St Catherine, and courage from the Easter story. They are able to relate how they try to make right choices in their own lives based on these values. Children were able to identify some of the most important values to them as truth, honesty and faithfulness, agreeing that their school would not be such a good place without them. The school's commitment to inclusion is driven passionately by the Head teacher, fully supported by the governing body and staff. The policy of never closing the door on anyone is described by the vicar as following the example of Jesus. As children move through the school, they have an increasing understanding of spirituality, such as the year 6 class observed who were able to discuss the characteristics of God, moving on to discuss how they can talk to God through prayer in good times as well as difficult times which linked to the assembly earlier in the day. Relationships throughout the school are excellent, and children speak of being taught to work both independently and collaboratively. Behaviour management, based on the school code, contains a range of values the most important of which is respect. Implicit in the code is forgiveness described by the Head teacher and staff as 'each day being a fresh start'. Displays of children's learning in RE around the school help to celebrate the church school identity. Some provide opportunities for reflection, and spiritual development, such as the child who wrote, 'I feel sad, who would betray Jesus?' and another writing their own version of the Lord's prayer, 'Dear God you are fantastic and great, let that be your name!' Children of all faiths are affirmed and this is presented in an excellent display of children from the school talking about their faith experiences, celebrating the school's commitment to inclusion and diversity. This will be further improved when the school's Christian values have been formally identified leading to a shared understanding by all members of the school community.

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

Daily collective worship is important in the life of the school and is Christian in character, providing a setting in which achievement in personal and academic development is affirmed. All staff and children attend, entering into a quiet and dignified setting, with a candle and cross as a focal point. A variety of mobiles created by children depict events like the Last Supper and Jesus the Light of the World. Children listen well and participate willingly, such as through impromptu drama about St George observed during the inspection. Understanding is developed and one child was able to offer that St George died for his faith. Assemblies taken by the vicar and curate are enjoyed, one child saying, 'We always learn something new, they help us understand, and it makes you think differently about yourself and how you should be as a person'. Children learn songs for festivals but they do not always feature regularly in daily assemblies. Prayer is always included, and each week there are prayers written by children. Times for reflection can provide opportunity for developing spiritually, and one child was able to say, 'God is generous, He gives us this earth. He doesn't make you do anything, but leads us in the right direction'. Children were able to translate this into making right choices in their behaviour. The Lord's prayer is known and children have a good understanding of this but there are not yet opportunities outside assemblies for children to pray at other times of day. Visits to church for end of term services and at key points in the church year such as Christmas, Ash Wednesday and Easter, which are well supported by parents, along with visits to support learning in RE give children some understanding of Anglican faith and practice.

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

The school is well known in the local community as a Church school and parents speak of wanting their children to attend because of its known Christian values, which include high levels of pastoral care, inclusion and clear expectations of behaviour, providing an environment in which their children can flourish. The strong leadership of the Head teacher and the excellent relationship with the Vicar are seen as the driving force. The mission statement says that the school aims to provide a caring Christian environment, promoting respect for all in the community. This is evident in practice, where children during the inspection were observed supporting each other in their learning. Church school self evaluation is carried out and discussed at Governing Body meetings. Governors and senior leaders are involved in some monitoring and evaluation, but this has yet to impact on the strategic vision of the school as a church school. Collective worship has recently been monitored by governors, gathering responses from children largely about the structure, but not yet about the impact on spiritual development and their day by day lives. Staff throughout the school are aware of the church school identity and are fully supportive of the ethos and practice. Parents and carers speak very positively about the school and the way in which it has provided support to individuals, families and the community. This was particularly evident following bereavements, when the school became a focal point for the community, led by the Head teacher and Vicar. There are regular surveys on a range of issues but staff, parent's and children's views have not yet been sought on the school as a church school. The partnership between church and school is excellent. The vicar is seen to be a part of the school community, and his pastoral support and availability is greatly appreciated by parents. The school invites participation in assemblies from different denominations, and members of different faiths support learning in RE. A range of charities are supported, and the children are very proud of their links with a school in Zambia.