



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Hormead Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Great Hormead, Buntingford SG9 0NR**

Diocese of St Albans

LEA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection : 12th & 15th January 2009
Previous S23 Inspection: 26th April, 16th & 19th May 2005
URN: 117439
Interim Headteacher: Mrs Gillian Langley
SIAS Inspector : Mrs Judith Ruff
SIAS Inspector No: NS 528

Context

Hormead Church of England VA Primary School is a small school of 55 pupils. Forty percent of pupils come from the designated catchment area, with others travelling from a variety of adjacent towns and villages to attend the school. Pupils on the SEN Code of Practice make up eighteen percent of the school population. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school is a very much valued part of the local community.

Overall distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a Church of England School is good

Hormead is a good church school. The school is experiencing change, with a long serving headteacher retiring at the end of last term. A new headteacher has been appointed, with an interim headteacher currently in post. At the time of the SIAS inspection, she had only been in post for one week. However, despite this significant change at headship level, the RE Subject Leader and Collective Worship Co-ordinator remains in post and has worked well, along with other staff members, to continue to build the distinctiveness of Hormead as a voluntary aided church school. In addition, the vicar from St Nicholas and other church members have used their expertise and connections with the local worshipping community to bring a real awareness of the church life and community links to pupils within the school.

Established strengths

- Links with the local church are outstanding and strengthen the Christian ethos significantly within the school
- The commitment and enthusiasm for the teaching of RE by the Subject Leader and other school staff
- The quality of pastoral care for pupils resulting in excellent relationships and outstanding behaviour in classes

Focus for development

- To ensure that the new Diocesan units of work on Christianity are appropriately and creatively resourced and where necessary, training is provided to ensure high quality delivery and maximum engagement and interest gained from pupils across the school
- To provide training for those staff leading collective worship and subsequently to monitor and evaluate the provision, providing peer support and encouragement through constructive suggestions for colleagues, including taking account of pupils' views and ideas
- To raise pupils' awareness of other religions and develop a greater understanding of cultural diversity

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

At Hormead the quality of relationships within a secure Christian ethos is good. The school community is proud of the Christian foundation and links with the local church community continue to be outstanding, as in the previous Section 23 judgement. Around the school there is good evidence of Christian signage and symbols, such as classroom focus tables. Pupils across the school feel valued and special. Within classes, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are keen to learn. At play, the older pupils show care and consideration for the younger ones. The School Council members interviewed demonstrated that they wanted the youngest pupils to 'have their say' and were very willing to take their views into account. Pupils are encouraged to think of others through charities such as 'Operation Christmas Child', the making of Mothers' Day posies and the distribution of harvest gifts. Staff members make considerable efforts to meet the needs of each individual child. Staff are very supportive and committed to maintaining and promoting the Christian ethos. They demonstrate good enthusiasm to participate in both collective worship and religious education. The governors and staff have two draft policies in place for Community Cohesion and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development, but these both require progressing into practical ways forward to impact upon the curriculum.

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

The school's collective worship co-ordinator is effective and proactive in this role. She has built very effective links with both the local church and the Diocesan Education Centre and used her initiative to refine and adapt the worship programme, particularly where additional interest, stimulation and opportunities for reflection need development. All the issues relating to collective worship from the previous report have been thoughtfully addressed. There is good involvement of the local vicar in discussing worship themes and in leading collective worship in school on a regular basis. Pupils are responsive during worship, although opportunities for them to give their own views on how to improve further collective worship are too limited. The school staff, although they are very willing to lead worship, have not received training for this. This would be very beneficial in order to improve further the quality of provision. Opportunities for a more structured monitoring and evaluation schedule could then be introduced, where peer observations could assist each leader in reflecting on ways in which to develop themes and resources further. At present, the policy on collective worship requires updating.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

At the time of the Inspection, the school had just commenced using the newly published Diocesan 'Units of Work on Christianity'. The Subject Leader and other staff are very enthusiastic about this resource. It has provided a good stimulus for the subject, both from the perspective of teachers and pupils, giving increased opportunities for developing thinking and questioning skills. However, the scheme has yet to become fully embedded and there is a need to continue to reflect on the best teaching strategies to use and resources to have available in future years. The school would benefit considerably by being able to network with other church schools, which are also in the process of adopting the new scheme to enable discussion of teaching methods and learning outcomes in particular. Assessment opportunities are being used well, in line with the scheme guidance, but this is in early stages of development. As teachers' confidence grows in assessing each pupil's RE outcomes, so the quality of reporting pupils' work in the annual reports can become more detailed and include statements on pupil performance in line with national expectations, for example. The standard of teaching observed was good and there were some good quality examples of pupils' work displayed around the school, such as the stained glass window work in the school entrance and the work on the 'Beatitudes', both from Key Stage 2 pupils. Pupils interviewed had a very limited understanding of faiths other than Christianity, and confused pieces of information that they had been taught about key religions. Themed RE events have proved very informative and enjoyable for pupils in building up their awareness of cultural diversity. However, this awareness is still at a relatively low level and requires further focus. The RE policy requires updating at the earliest opportunity to reflect the present arrangements.

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

The Interim Headteacher has a determination and commitment to ensure that she plays her part in upholding the Christian ethos of the school. She has formed effective working relationships with staff in particular, and has been supportive of their plans, in both the areas of resourcing and training. The leadership provided by the collective worship co-ordinator and RE subject leader is good. She has a clear vision for the two areas, but requires funding support in order to be able to purchase resources and external training expertise in order to improve provision further. The money allocated this year for her budget is reasonable, but this has not been as regular or as sizeable an amount in previous years. This has left the school too dependent on loaned resources, yet needing to build up quality resource collections which are easily accessible and can be passed on within the school when changes of staff occur.

Foundation Governors have a good understanding of the school and provide good leadership. They have already begun to address issues relating to the induction of the substantive headteacher into a church school.

The school meets the statutory requirements for Collective Worship.	Yes
The school meets the statutory requirements for Religious Education.	Yes