

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Hormead Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Great Hormead
Buntingford
Herts SG9 0NR

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection:	27 April 2012
Date of last inspection:	12 & 15 January 2009
School's unique reference number:	117439
Headteacher:	Andrew Reade
Inspector's name and number:	Bob Hopcraft (484)

School context

Hormead is a much smaller than average sized Voluntary Aided primary school in a rural setting. It has benefitted from significant work to the fabric of the buildings in recent years and provides a bright and supportive environment for learning. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is above average, while the proportion of those eligible for free school meals is below. The numbers of pupils leaving the school at the end of year to move to middle school has been very high in recent years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Hormead CofE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Hormead is a good church school with many strengths. The headteacher, his staff and clergy have been effective in driving development since the last inspection, enabling pupils to grow in a supportive environment where Christian values are implicit at every turn.

Established strengths

- The strong commitment of the headteacher and staff to promoting the school's Christian values and ethos;
- High quality relationships with the church and the local community, which are evident in the school's strong 'family feel';
- The quality of collective worship and the positive impact this has on Christian values.

Focus for development

- Develop systems for the formal evaluation of collective worship in order to gain a clear view of its quality and impact.
- Promote opportunities for governors and other stakeholder groups to be more closely engaged with the self-evaluation and strategic development of the school, specifically *as a Church school*.

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

This is because strong Christian values are implicit in the day-to-day life of the school. All are aware of these through such tools as *The Promises*, which are prominently displayed in the hall and the entrance to the school and through the very positive role models provided by adults. As a result, pupils know implicitly how they should behave towards one another and relationships are good at all levels. The school provides effective support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which are further enhanced by the opportunity to provide tangible help for Jinack Nursery School in The Gambia. Recently forged links with Wenlock CofE Junior School in Luton are also impacting positively on pupils' understanding of the multicultural society in which they live. Hormead is strongly inclusive and the establishment of *Talk Circles*, in which all pupils can participate and have their say about the school's future development, allows them to grow into their roles as future citizens. The learning environment has developed significantly since the last SIAS inspection and the school now provides a warm and vibrant space in which to learn. The establishment of reflective areas in each classroom, which provide opportunities for quiet reflection during the day, have had a particularly good impact.

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

Pupils enjoy collective worship and recognise it as a special time. Increased opportunities to participate, plan and lead worship mean that they feel included and have opportunities to influence the way worship is developing. As a result, they are able to talk at length about particular acts of worship and demonstrate good knowledge of a range of bible stories, Christian festivals and saints. They are familiar with a range of prayers and songs that support their worship and are particularly proud to have been able to help in the development of the school prayer. School leaders are clear about the significant support they have received from the Church and are sad to have lost their incumbent as a result of her recent retirement. Nevertheless, school leaders are determined to move forward with worship and have made good provision for ensuring that these links remain positive until such time as a new incumbent is appointed. The recent development of using the church for worship on the last Friday of each month has proved very popular. One such occasion was observed in action during the inspection, generating an atmosphere of joy and celebration which provided, as one parent put it "... a very positive note at the end of the week". Worship is well planned; however, the school has yet to implement systems for formal evaluation of the quality and impact of worship. The range of continuing professional development undertaken by staff since the last inspection mean that they are well trained and confident to lead worship on a regular basis.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

This is because pupils reach above average standards, reflected in observations undertaken during the visit and in the school's own assessment records. Pupils make good progress in their understanding as they move through the school, enabling them to articulate ever more complex ideas, rooted in a range of opportunities for active learning, visits, discussion and reflection. Good teaching, backed up by good subject knowledge and use of an improved range of resources, enables pupils to respond to challenging questions and to explore deeper spiritual meaning, for example one pupil who asked "*Is there a door into Heaven?*" Assessment is developing well and use of individual "*I can...*" targets is enabling pupils to know and understand what they need to do in order to improve. As a result, pupils enjoy religious education and talk animatedly about their learning, demonstrating a good understanding of the Christian faith for their age and ability. They also demonstrate a good understanding of other world religions. Religious education benefits from an enthusiastic subject leader, who has encouraged staff to take advantage of a range of opportunities for continuing professional development. This has impacted well on the quality of learning experiences for pupils.

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

The headteacher has worked closely with staff to develop a strong church school ethos, which is clearly evident in all the school's documentation. In this, he has been very well supported by clergy and key foundation governors. The school has worked hard to implement the areas for development identified in the previous SIAS inspection report and as a result the Diocesan units of work are now fully resourced, staff professional development has impacted positively on provision and pupils now demonstrate a good understanding of other world religions and cultural diversity. School leaders seek the views of stakeholders regularly, using responses to drive appropriate change. Parent responses to questionnaires distributed before the inspection were universally positive, recognising that Hornead is a good church school that has a positive impact on those who work and play there. As one parent put it "*The school is strongly inclusive, providing all students with the opportunity to develop and realise their potential*". Parents are very supportive of the way in which the school promotes its Christian ethos, many referring to the strong 'family feel' and the opportunities for meaningful worship, both in school and at the local church. While school leaders have completed a detailed and honest self-evaluation of its work specifically as a *church school*, governors have yet to be fully involved in this process and areas for development have yet to be translated into an action plan for future strategic development, including plans for the future development of collective worship and religious education. The school continues to benefit from very strong links with the local community and parish, particularly important at the current time, following the recent retirement of the incumbent.