



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Kensworth CofE VC Lower School
Common Road, Kensworth, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 3RH

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: Tuesday 08 May 2007
Previous S23 Inspection: 21 and 22 May 2002
URN: 109602
Headteacher: Mrs Annelore Kentish
SIAS Inspector Name: Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No: 484

School Context

Kensworth CofE VC Lower School is a small school in rural Bedfordshire with 50 pupils on roll. It is set in pleasant grounds, with a mixture of new and older buildings. It has fewer pupils with learning difficulties than average and all pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school places a strong emphasis on the creative curriculum, and achieved the Artsmark Silver Award in 2006.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Kensworth CofE VC Lower School as a Church of England school are Satisfactory

Kensworth CofE VC Lower School is a satisfactory Church school with some good features. The headteacher and her staff are working hard to develop its Christian character in an environment where each individual is valued and this provides a strong basis for significant and sustained future improvement. Pupils enjoy school and the environment is bright and well cared for. Relationships are good and pupils are encouraged to care for others within a Christian community.

Established strengths

- The clear vision of the headteacher for the development of the school as a Church school;
- The promotion of a strong, caring Christian ethos, which is implicit in all that the school does;
- The strong team ethos within the school, which nourishes and supports positive relationships at all levels;
- The good opportunities provided for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural skills;
- The very good links with the local Church and community.

Focus for development

- Develop a systematic approach to evaluating the quality and impact of collective worship;
- Further develop the use of values education within the curriculum and collective worship;
- Strengthen and build on the current evaluation of the school as a Church school by ensuring that governors play a key role in challenging the school to meet its Christian vision and that areas for development are included in the school development plan.

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

This is because all pupils feel valued and special; they enjoy their work and are encouraged to achieve their best. Pupils are treated with respect and respond well to the family atmosphere the school promotes. The school works hard to ensure a secure and happy environment for all, moving one parent to write *"It has a real sense of community, it is like a family"*. Strong Christian values underpin the work of the school and are an integral part of all that it says and does. As a result, relationships are good at all levels: relationships are based on mutual respect and there is a strong emphasis on teamwork throughout the school. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and are encouraged to develop a thoughtful and caring attitude towards the environment. The School Council is a particularly good example of this: elected members take their responsibilities seriously and focus well on ideas to develop and improve the school environment. The school's clear guidance on behaviour and its inclusive character help to promote a strong moral sense of right and wrong. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their social skills and an understanding of the needs of others, for example the developing links with a local special school. The school's environment supports cultural development well, and a range of displays and resources help to develop pupils' understanding of those from other backgrounds and cultures. The environment has also been developed to reflect more fully the school's Christian character and the entrance hall has a particularly striking display in the form of a large cross, which displays pupils' writing on the theme of Easter.

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

Worship is an important part of the school day and pupils are able to talk about key Christian values. Acts of worship meet statutory requirements and take place in a spirit of respect and reverence. The programme for worship is clearly planned and the themes followed are appropriate to the needs of most learners; however, the school does not formally evaluate the quality and impact of collective worship at the present time. The school is developing the use of values education within its acts of collective worship, but this is currently very much in its infancy and is not, as yet, fully integrated into the planning and provision for worship. Pupils enjoy worship and participate through song, prayer and responses. The school hall provides a conducive environment for collective worship, with a wooden cross and colourful backdrop providing a clear focal point. Worship contributes well to the spiritual development of pupils and opportunities are planned for quiet reflective thought. The school has a positive and developing prayer life and the school prayer, developed jointly by older children with the support of the clergy, is a good example of this. This prayer is used within worship and at the end of the school day and grace is also said before lunch. The major Christian festivals are observed during the year and pupils can talk about the main events of Christmas and Easter. There are strong links with the local clergy, who play an active and important role in the school for both pupils and staff. Clergy lead worship in the school and services are held in local churches on agreed occasions throughout the year. The local parish Church is at some distance from the school, making visits there somewhat difficult, but the school has been creative in solving this problem, making use of the local Methodist Church building for occasional services.

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

The headteacher provides a clear focus for the development of the school as a Christian community and she is supported in this by her staff. Governors are beginning to challenge the head and her staff to meet this vision, but this challenge is not yet rigorous enough and, while governors have been involved in the school's self-evaluation as a Church school, this type of formal evaluation is still in its early stages. Areas for development have been clearly identified, but strategic plans for these do not yet feature in the school's development plan. Parents are appreciative of the school's open door policy and the many informal ways in which they can engage in positive dialogue with staff. However, the school does not, as yet, have a regular formal system for gaining the views of parents and other stakeholders about its work and development. The school has good induction procedures for pupils and staff and the school's Christian foundation is both clear and explicit in these processes. Staff share a common view about the school's Christian character and are comfortable about their part in this. There are very strong links with the church, parish and local community and this reflects the strong sense of caring and sharing which the school promotes. The school is increasingly involved in the local Church through such initiatives as the junior choir and Sunday school and pupils are encouraged to consider, and take the initiative in, a wide range of charitable giving.