



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Diocese of St Albans



**St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**  
Langleybury Lane  
Hunton Bridge  
King's Langley  
Hertfordshire  
WD4 8RJ

**LEA:** Hertfordshire  
**SIAS Inspection :** 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006  
**Previous S23 Inspection:** September 2001  
**URN:** 117417  
**Headteacher:** Sue Rayment  
**SIAS Inspector :** Lyn Field NS 151

### Context

This is a school of average size that serves the Ecclesiastical Parish of Langleybury. Most pupils are White British and their attainment is slightly above average when they start school. A year ago the vicar of the parish, Revd Louise Ellson died. A new vicar will take up post in November.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

Children leave this school with a rich experience of what it means to be part of a Christian community. The headteacher, the governors and the church are of one mind in their vision for a school where children's spiritual development is central to their academic achievement.

### Established strengths

- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher working jointly with governors and staff
- The part played by worship and prayer in children's spiritual development
- The way the that children are helped to deal with both celebration and loss in their lives
- The spiritual and practical involvement of the Church in the life of the school.

### Focus for development

- To set challenging and creative tasks in RE that enable children to express the depth of their understanding

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

This school is clearly a worshipping as well as a learning community. Key events in the life of the school, as well as religious festivals, are recognised in acts of worship throughout the year. The unique quality of this school is the way in which it enables children to understand how the human experiences of celebration and loss can be expressed in the setting of worship. Birthdays are celebrated in weekly assemblies in church and at the end of the year, bellringers ring a farewell to the Y6 leavers followed by a picnic hosted by church members. These occasions show children that each individual is valued as a child of God and that key points in life gather significance and meaning when shared with the whole community. One child asked to be baptised in school time and there was a party afterwards to celebrate. Children have a mature spiritual understanding of the human experiences of celebration and loss. They talk movingly of how they will always feel the sadness of losing Revd Louise but they know it is time to move on and celebrate new beginnings. They are involved in the design of the memorial garden but they are also planning a service of welcome for the new vicar, their own version of the licensing ceremony. The school has introduced liturgical RE into its syllabus and this helps children understand the Christian teaching that underpins the pattern of worship. It ensures their participation in worship is far more meaningful because they have explored the Bible reading in RE and circle time and it has been the focus of prayer throughout the week. Teachers deliver this effectively because they have a briefing session at the beginning of each week. Children read or act out passages in whole school worship and visiting clergy develop these themes. It results in a sense of reverence and anticipation as classes enter the hall. They all join in the spoken responses and in the singing and there is a real sense of this school coming together as part of the wider church community. This has been strengthened over recent months by the generosity shown by the clergy of surrounding parishes in maintaining a regular presence in the school.

### **The effectiveness of Religious Education is good**

This is because the regular evaluation and monitoring of RE has resulted in changes that are achieving ongoing improvements in teaching and learning. This is reported to the governing body on a regular basis. The introduction of liturgical RE to the curriculum has significantly increased pupils' understanding of key Christian beliefs. Scrutiny of pupils' work identified the need to set tasks that developed their understanding of religious ideas and which were not dependent on their skills in literacy. This has improved the progression in children's learning but some activities still do not enable pupils to express their ideas at the same high level they demonstrate in discussion. This is because assessment is used to identify the standards pupils have already attained rather than in planning challenging and creative tasks to help them move to the next level. Marking does not consistently focus on the understanding of religious concepts. Pupils respond well to creative homework tasks and this maintains the high profile of RE in the school. Standards of attainment are well above average especially in the younger classes where recent improvements have made sure that children are making a good rate of progress from the start. In the foundation class they are learning key skills in listening and reflecting by making links between Bible stories and what happens in their own lives. This is effective throughout the school because teachers have high expectations of how children work with partners and contribute to group and whole class discussion. Teachers are excellent role models in showing how everyone's opinion should be valued and given appropriate time. The subjects chosen for study are relevant and meaningful so that by Year 6 children have sufficient experience and understanding to take the discussion forward themselves and can apply beliefs and values in a global context, giving real examples from world affairs. Attitudes to RE are good and pupils feel the subject prepares them to encounter all cultures as they grow up and to make their own personal decisions of faith. Teachers plan a spiritual dimension to lessons that engages pupils whether or not they have a personal faith and the youngest children can talk about how things can 'hurt inside'. Moments of reflection and prayer support all pupils in their personal development because they link to the objectives for the lesson and are an integral part of the school's approach to learning.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school are outstanding**

The headteacher, supported by the deputy, gives clear and compassionate leadership to the school. She and the vicar took up their posts within a few months of each other. They forged an inspirational partnership that rejuvenated the school so that children learn effectively in a community that lives by Christian values. They brought the church and the school together so that the two communities are mutually supportive. This happens at all levels from the spiritual support of the headteacher to family involvement in clearing the churchyard. The governors share the head's vision for the school and they constantly monitor how the school is embracing the Christian faith. The chair of governors understands how this ethos makes a difference to what children can achieve and so governors never lose sight of the impact of their decisions on children and adults. Candidates for posts in the school need to demonstrate their respect for faith and show their approach to the care of children that is based on Christian values. Spiritual or moral dilemmas that arise in difficult situations are discussed with governors and the head is supported in implementing decisions. Evaluation of the school's progress is a shared activity because the head has established a culture of reflection and this is why the school continues to build on its strengths. This also means that the evaluation can sometimes be a little modest. Parents recognise the commitment of the headteacher and governors in leading the school and have confidence in the sensitive way the staff care for their children and feel they learn skills that will support them in life beyond school.