



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Diocese of St Albans



Pulford Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School Pulford Road, Leighton Buzzard LU7 1AB

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 16 January 2007
Previous S23 Inspection: 3-4 July 2002
URN: 109619
Headteacher: Jim Meager
SIAS Inspector: Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

School context

The school is the oldest school in the town of Leighton Buzzard occupying the present building since 1883. There have been several improvements and extensions made, the most recent in 2004. The pupils come from an average socio-economic background and their achievements are in line with national expectations.

Overall distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a Church of England school are good.

This is because of the commitment of the headteacher and staff to create a caring family like learning situation in which all are valued and supported to achieve in an environment that encourages trust and respect. The strength of the ethos and relationships have created 'the Pulford family' and helped the school in its aim of being 'a church school for the whole community'. Christian values underpin the cycle of values that are the basis for worship and extend throughout the whole school day.

Established strengths

- The impact of the headteacher on the ethos of the school.
- The high profile of Values education securely links to Christian values.
- The contribution of music to worship and spiritual development.

Focus for development

- Extend and enhance spiritual awareness of displays in school.
- Raise standards further in RE by the use of a consistent marking policy and the annotation and levelling of work samples.

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

The ethos of the school is securely rooted in Christian values that have resulted in a family like learning situation and the whole community is known as 'the Pulford family'. The recent introduction of 'Values education' reinforces and underpins the Christian values of the school and permeates the daily life of the school. Pupils speak confidently about the values helping them to live and work together. All learners are respected as individuals, challenged and supported by the staff to enable them to achieve. Parents speak with pride of the support provided by the school for their children, as well as for themselves in times of personal difficulty, such as bereavement. Pupils are happy and confident in their learning and know staff support them to achieve the high expectations set. Academic and personal achievement is celebrated by the use of stickers and in the weekly Leaf assembly, where pupils may receive a leaf to be displayed on the 'Pulford tree'.

There is a range of after-school activities that extend Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural opportunities otherwise provided by cross-curricular links, especially in music. The school is an Eco school and has global learning links to schools in America and Germany.

Staff provide role models for pupils in their relationships. Pupils know there is always someone to talk to and help. They provide peer support and older help younger in a variety of ways including playground friends and the rainbow bench. The distinctive environment is enhanced by the cross in the entrance and displays such as the Pulford tree, class rules, 'How to be friends'. There are missed opportunities however to reinforce spiritual learning especially with the banners in the hall.

The impact of worship on the school community is good.

This is because of the high profile worship is given in school. Worship is based on values, related to Christian stories and reinforced throughout the school day and through displays. There is written evaluation of each act of worship by staff, pupils or visitors to inform future planning. Pupils benefit from a range of worship experiences because there are a variety of leaders, including staff, clergy and 'Open the Book' Team. Reflective music, candles and focus table create a respectful atmosphere. In 'Worship through Song' pupils sing joyfully and have an obvious commitment and understanding of the words they use. Pupils are responsible for the organisation of the hall. They speak of the special time of coming together to be quiet and to learn about God. They also describe worship as 'a time to think about what you have done or said or what you should have said or done.' Parents value worship in reinforcing the values of the school and in helping to make the pupils good members of society.

The children are familiar with the pattern of Anglican worship through regular use of Anglican greetings and responses, the Lord's Prayer and an annual Eucharist as a part of the Leavers' Service.

The effectiveness of religious education is good.

This is because staff and pupils enjoy Religious Education and understand the continuing links with worship and values education in spiritual and moral development. Planning follows the agreed syllabus and links learning about religion and learning from religion by often comparing other religions to the pupils' knowledge of Christianity. For example, in a unit 'Special Food', pupils explored food laws of Muslims, Jews and Buddhists with their own experiences of special food. Pupils have a good knowledge of Judaism, explaining in detail Kosher food and the story of Hanukkah. Staff have a good knowledge of the subject and are supported by the co-ordinator who cascades training to keep all informed of new developments. The co-ordinator monitors planning and has conducted a round of lesson

observations to assess standards of teaching and learning. This has resulted in an identification of the need to introduce annotated work samples as an aid to inform pupil assessment.

Discussion with staff and pupils and work scrutiny show that there is good teaching and learning through effective use of resources, use of information technology and a range of teaching strategies. Thus standards are in line with national expectations. There are, however, inconsistencies in the standards of marking of work. Written comments often do not refer to the RE content of the work and so do not help children with their understanding of religious concepts.

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

This is because of the commitment of the headteacher, shared with the whole community for the Christian vision and values. It is underpinned by the links between worship and religious education that permeate the school day. This has established an ethos of care and respect that has created 'the Pulford Family'. There is good communication with parents, reinforced by the open door policy of the school and the approachability of all the staff. Prayer has an important role in school; in worship, the use of the Pulford File (in which pupils can ask for prayers to be said on behalf of others) and at opening of governors meetings. Foundation governors are effective in their roles and receive regular curriculum reports to keep informed of developments in school. The importance of spirituality in school is demonstrated by the joint training of staff and governors in a session on 'Celtic Spirituality'. Music is very effectively used to develop a spiritual awareness. All staff are role models for pupils to follow, as are older pupils for younger, such as the overheard comments 'carry a chair like this' and 'no – walk, don't run'. The school actively supports a range of local and international charities. There are strong effective links with the church that is used for concerts and governors meetings as well as for festival services. The school choir makes meaningful contributions to worship in many churches in the town as singers and worshippers. Links with the local community area also strengthened by the invitations to the older members of the community to rehearsals and an annual tea. Pupils perform at the annual Mayday Festival. Thus the school enjoys a good reputation in the community as it aims to be 'a church school for the whole community.'