



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Little Gaddesden Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Church Road, Little Gaddesden, Berkhamsted HP4 1NX

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	6 March 2009
Previous S23 Inspection:	24 February 2006
URN: 117443	117443
Headteacher:	Mrs Charis Geoghegan
SIAS Inspector Name:	Revd Vanessa Cato
SIAS Inspector No:	

School Context

This is a small village school which serves the local community and the surrounding area. It is housed in a modernised and extended Victorian building and celebrated its 150th Anniversary last year. Most children are White British representing a variety of backgrounds. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. A significant number of children join or leave in years 1 – 6.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Little Gaddesden as a Church of England school are good

At Little Gaddesden School the ethos of Christian caring is embedded in the Golden Rules, understood at all levels and demonstrated in the life of the school. The school is well supported by the local community, examples of which are the continuing involvement of past parents on the governing body and a former chair of governors (in his 90s) who continues to run the Chess Club and leads the group which prays regularly for the school. The school is also well-supported by, and has good links with, the local church. Wider Church of England links include the school's participation in the Diocesan Schools' Harvest services, the Bishop of Hertford's involvement in the school's 150th Anniversary service at the Church and visits to St Albans Abbey.

Established strengths

- A caring, supportive environment based on Christian values, enabling pupils to flourish as individuals and as a community.
- A highly effective partnership between the school, the church and the wider community.
- Key Christian values underpin the leadership of the school and relationships within it. The skills of the Headteacher are particularly good in this respect.

Focus for development

- Explore with staff and governors, through inset or similar, the spiritual aspect of children's development and how it may be supported both within the school environment and across the whole curriculum.
- Formally monitor the teaching of R.E., with recorded observations, in order that teaching, learning and worship may benefit from shared reflection and critical evaluation.
- Put in place an effective system for recording and evaluating Collective Worship.

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

Christian values of care and responsibility are integral to the school at all levels. There is a strong involvement by governors, the local community and the church in the life of the school and the children are involved in local events. The children know the Golden Rules which are based on Christian values. Several charities are supported by the school. The School Council have set up a very active eco-council in response to environmental issues. There is an effective playground peer mentor system whereby the older children look out for the younger ones. The children report little bullying and feel issues are dealt with fairly. The Headteacher has particular skills in dealing with relationship issues and has fostered a strong Christian ethos of care and respect in the school. The moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is well supported, regardless of their faith background. The children experience some sense of awe and wonder in the attractive surroundings of the school, nature walks, and visits to Ashridge. However, there is little evidence of a wider spiritual development in the school environment or general curriculum. There are few open questions on classroom displays designed to explore religious and spiritual awareness. Supporting spiritual development is clearly a training need at Little Gaddesden.

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

The act of Collective Worship observed was good, and the children were engaged in spite of it being the second assembly of the day. Teachers and Learning Assistants were all present. Governors frequently attend. The focus table is well placed and children are involved. Catering for a wide age range is an issue at times, especially with regard to suitable hymns and songs. There are very strong Anglican links. Major festivals and seasons are celebrated. Some services take place in church, notably the celebration of the school's 150th Anniversary with the Bishop of Hertford. An excellent, and very professional, DVD of the Nativity was produced last year with whole school involvement, enhancing the children's understanding and appreciation of the story. Visits are made to the Abbey and the whole school attends the Diocesan Schools Harvest service. The Vicar regularly leads Collective Worship, and leaders of other denominations and faiths are also occasionally involved with Worship. The children know the school prayer and "Grace" is said in classrooms before lunch, but there are no areas for quiet personal reflection. There is no monitoring of Collective Worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

Progress has been made with the development of the R.E. curriculum in line with the Herts Agreed syllabus and there is a fairly positive attitude to lessons among the pupils. The children enjoy learning about other faiths and feel it gives them respect for the beliefs and practices of others. There is some evidence of "learning from" religion, though the children do not always find it easy to articulate this. The teaching observed was satisfactory to good, with some good challenging questions in one lesson. IT was well used in the classroom and for homework. There were some children who needed more help to make the personal and life connections. The standard of written work is not always at the level of the child's ability, though there is some well-executed R.E. art work around the school. Lesson plans are comprehensive, but do not always show evidence of evaluation. There is little formal monitoring of R.E. teaching and no written documentation of what has taken place. Evidence of the sharing of good practice and plans for improving the children's learning experience is weak. This is an area for development.

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

The governing body is committed and supportive and the foundation governors are regular church members. The Vicar is a foundation governor and is as involved in school life as possible. Governors are keen to promote the caring, compassionate and friendly ethos they see as the essence of a good Church School and several of them have other voluntary roles in the school. The Headteacher's vision, Christian leadership and relationship skills are valued and respected by staff, parents, governors and the wider community. She has developed and encouraged a team spirit. Parents generally have a positive view of the leadership and the effect on the pupils of the school as a Church school that serves the whole community.