



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Long Marston Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School
Station Road, Long Marston, Tring HP23 4QS

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	Thursday 02 April 2009
Previous S48 Inspection:	24 April 2006
URN:	117459
Headteacher:	Peter Dickenson
SIAS Inspector Name:	Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No:	484

School Context

Long Marston VA CofE Primary School is set in pleasant grounds in the heart of the village of Long Marston on the outskirts of Tring. The accommodation is bright, spacious and welcoming. The school has grown in size in recent years and significant building work has been undertaken during the tenure of the present headteacher. Pupils, who come from a range of social backgrounds, are mostly of *White British* heritage and the number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The headteacher has been in post for some years and is due to leave the school at the end of the summer term 2009.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Long Marston as a Church of England school are good.

This is because of the very real impact the school's Christian values has on the lives of pupils, which results in outstanding relationships and a genuine family feel within the school. The leadership of the headteacher has been central to this and his vision for the development of the school as a Church school is clear and effective. As a result of the high levels of care, pupils thrive and grow to become responsible and caring citizens.

Established strengths

- The excellent leadership and vision of the headteacher for the development of the school as a Church school;
- The outstanding impact that Christian values have on pupils' lives;
- The good quality acts of worship and the good relationship with the local church;
- The good provision for religious education (RE), which benefits from strong leadership and effective monitoring and evaluation.

Focus for development

- Develop ways to monitor consistently the quality and impact of acts of worship;
- Continue to challenge higher attaining pupils in RE so that they develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of spiritual issues;
- Develop a strategic plan for the future development of the school as a Church school and incorporate this into the school's development plan.

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

This is because Christian values have a strong and tangible impact on pupils and the school community. As a result, relationships are outstanding at all levels and pupils show a genuine concern for the wellbeing of those around them and in the wider world. Pupils talk about being helpful, careful and kind and enjoy stories with a moral, which, they say, help them to be better people. These values nourish and encourage their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development well. The school provides a clear moral framework and pupils have many opportunities to grow into useful and responsible citizens. An example of this is the effective School Council, which has helped to identify and introduce a range of developments, including the *friendship stop* in the playground. Christian teachings lie at the heart of the school community, which gives it a strong family feel. As one parent put it: *"Children are cared for and cherished, as they are at home"*. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in local community events, such as the Autumn Fair and have a good understanding of the world beyond the school, which contributes well to community cohesion. The school environment is bright and welcoming and the outdoor areas provide many opportunities for quiet thought and reflection. Displays are used well to encourage learning and to reflect pupils' individual responses, for example the display asking *"What is Heaven Like?"* which encouraged one pupil to write that in her Heaven *"... no matter how different you are... you would be accepted by everyone"*. Such displays, coupled with the clear presence of Christian symbols in the school's public areas, mean that no one is in any doubt that this is a church school.

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

Pupils are very positive about collective worship and can talk about the impact that it has on their lives. They are fully engaged in the well-planned and varied acts of worship, which they enjoy. Through worship, pupils are introduced to a range of Christian festivals and Bible stories. As a result, they have a good knowledge of the key landmarks in the Church year and are able to discuss the main Christian festivals and their significance. Pupils have access to a wide range of traditional and modern hymns and prayer is used well to encourage reflection and thought. The school's *prayer box* ensures that prayer extends beyond worship and provides opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts and concerns. Worship is further enhanced by the strong links with the local Church and pupils and parents appreciate the opportunities to worship in the Church at key times in the year. The school has many informal ways of monitoring the quality of acts of worship; however, this is not done in any systematic way, therefore the school has no formal evidence as to the quality of acts of worship or of their impact on pupils' lives. There are good resources to support worship and the banners and murals, the cross and candle help to provide a conducive atmosphere and setting for worship in the hall. Good use is made of recorded and live music to enhance worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

This is because pupils attain expected levels or better in RE and demonstrate a good knowledge of Christianity and other world religions. Through improved training opportunities for staff and the enthusiasm and commitment of the subject leader, the school has raised its expectations of pupils in RE; however, this has yet to impact fully on overall standards and progress, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Teaching in RE is good, with some outstanding features. As a result, pupils are becoming better engaged in their own learning and know how to improve. Assessment has developed well since the previous Section 48 inspection and the school's regular levelling of pupils' work ensures that staff and pupils have a shared view of standards and progress. Very good use is made of a range of resources to teach RE and good use is made of works of art to encourage understanding and reflection, for example the paintings of Paul Forsey, which encouraged pupils to respond in a personal way to the key events of Jesus' life and ministry. RE supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and pupils enjoy the varied learning opportunities on offer, for example to visit a mosque. This enables pupils to engage in a sensitive understanding of other faiths and belief systems. The monitoring of RE has developed well since the last section 48 inspection and as a result the subject leader has a very clear view of strengths and areas for development within the subject.

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

The headteacher gives excellent leadership and continues to provide a strong Christian role model for all who work and learn at Long Marston. A strong sense of shared values and ethos underpin all that the school does and these are shared by all stakeholders. As a result, Christian values underpin the school's policy and practice and impact positively on its Christian character. The governing body engages in discussion about the school's distinctive Christian character and what this means. However, there is currently no strategic plan to use this understanding to map out the school's future development as a Church school and such developments are not included in the school's development planning cycle. Links with the local Church and community are strong and pupils have many opportunities to initiate and to engage in charitable giving and community events.