



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

North Mymms St Mary's Church of England
Voluntary Aided Primary School
Dellsome Lane, Welham Green, Hatfield AL9 7NF



Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 3rd December 2009
Previous S48 Inspection: March 2007
URN: 117497
Headteacher: Jane Guy
SIAS Inspector Name: Alan Thornsby
SIAS Inspector No: NS 137

School Context

St Mary's serves North Mymms and the surrounding area. Most pupils are White British, with a proportion from the travelling community. There is an increasing number from minority ethnic groups, some of whom are at an early stage of learning English. There is an above average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The head has been in post since January 2008, following several years of staffing and leadership instability.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's School as a Church of England school are good.

The ethos of Christian love in action and the commitment to the development of every individual results in pupils making good academic and personal progress. They have a good level of confidence and self esteem because of their secure understanding of the impact of Christian values on their lives.

Established strengths

- The leadership of the headteacher in ensuring adults share the vision to develop each individual child
- The high quality pastoral care for everyone in school
- The strong links with the church and the input of the vicar that develop the spiritual life of the school

Focus for development

- To develop a formal system of monitoring and evaluation of worship
- To improve progress in religious education through the use of differentiated tasks
- The governing body to monitor the distinctive nature of a church school through an explicit demonstration of Christian values

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

The ethos of the school is securely founded on Christian love in action. This means that every child is valued as an individual whose needs are recognised and supported by the school. High quality pastoral care means pupils know they are safe and secure. They know the school goes the extra mile to ensure everyone achieves as well as they can academically and personally. This includes the provision of a parents' and pupils' worker to support shared learning. This results in confident and happy pupils who are well behaved and know their achievements are shared and celebrated. They are all able to express their feelings and empathise with those of others. They relate the values of forgiveness and redemption to the teachings of Jesus and have a good understanding of the distinctive nature of their school. 'Here you are forgiven if you do something wrong. You say sorry and make up'. Pupils understand the reasons for moral decisions because of the way issues are explored in the Social and Emotional aspects of Learning and Personal Social and Health Education and the strong links that exist between religious education and collective worship. They are encouraged to pose big questions and offer discussion points through the use of reflective displays such as Remembrance Day. Other displays throughout school reinforce positive behaviour and commemorate belonging to St Mary's Church. Cross-curricular links with RE and worship result in good spiritual moral social and cultural development. Effective use of the school grounds and keeping chickens reinforces stewardship and respect for creation. Care and respect for other people is reflected in the range of charities supported by the school.

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

Collective worship is a key factor in promoting and reinforcing the care, respect and moral decisions of children. Pupils understand it is a 'time to learn what to do to be kind to each other.' Themes based on the Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) linked to Christian values are sufficiently flexible to allow inclusion of topical relevant issues. Pupils are engaged by lively delivery by leaders and links made to their own experiences. These include the vicar who plays a significant role in the spiritual life of the school. They explain the significance of the greeting as 'its like a blessing to show we are all with God and it helps us to think.' Pupils describe the high profile of prayer in school as 'an opportunity to talk to Jesus and say sorry or thank you. They have a good awareness of the church calendar and describe the meaning of Jesus the light of the world as 'Jesus taught everyone to be a good friend and how to treat each other.' Pupils use themes in worship and the parables of Jesus to inform their attitudes and moral decisions. Children are familiar with church because of these visits and the regular presence of the vicar and choir leader in school. The Easter service includes the Eucharist to which pupils respond with a sense of calm and respect. The vicar often talks informally to pupils and uses this as basis for a monitoring report to the governing body. The school is aware of the need to introduce a more formal evaluation

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good.

Religious education is regarded as a core subject in the school. It is well managed by two enthusiastic and knowledgeable coordinators. Being from different phases of the school allows them bring fresh eyes to their overview of the subject. They have developed a syllabus relevant to the school using the locally agreed syllabus and material from the diocese. Scrutiny of planning and pupils work informs action plans. They have also highlighted the need for differentiation of tasks and greater challenge for more able pupils. End of unit assessments indicate that standards are improving as with other subject areas in school. Teaching is good because of good rapport with pupils and a lively pace. The way teachers develop questioning and pupils' thinking skills show they have a good understanding of their pupils. There is a balance of learning about and learning from religion. There is good progression across the school when common themes are explored. For example the youngest children shared their experiences of needing patience to wait for a special event to empathise with Mary after the Annunciation. Older pupils explored the meaning and significance of the Old Testament prophecy of the birth of Jesus. Pupils of all ages have a good knowledge of religious vocabulary because of the amount of discussion and questioning in lessons. Written work is often well presented and pupils respond to teachers comments that develop their thinking further. Pupils value learning about other religions because 'we can respect other religions. We share some beliefs, but God and Jesus are different.'

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

The head is providing inspirational leadership that enables staff to provide the best opportunities for all pupils. Christian values shape the decisions the school makes about behaviour and moral judgements. The work of staff especially during recent times of difficulty has shown pupils how to work as a team. Recent staffing difficulties have been resolved and the school is now able to move forward because of a stable and committed staff and their effective work planning. Although the governing body are committed to the Christian distinctive character of the school, reflected in their funding of termly transport to church for festival services, they have not yet fully explored the implications of Christian values on their roles or the impact in school. They are all aware of the work of staff and vicar in the school's self-evaluation as a church school. Parents praise the school for the way it prepares children academically and personally for life beyond school with care and respect for each other and other people. Typical comments include 'thoughtfulness, consideration and good behaviour are second nature' and 'they have a good start and know about moral decisions. This is an excellent start for the next stage of learning.' The school enjoys good links with the diocese as well as with another local church school. These links allow sharing of ideas and developments. The links with the church are enhanced through visits for worship and as a place of study. The school makes regular contribution to the church magazine.