



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Northaw Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Vineyards Road, Northaw, Potters Bar EN6 4PB



Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 30th November 2009
Previous S48 Inspection: 27 September 2007
URN: 117569
Headteacher: Mr Ray Clarke
SIAS Inspector Name: Revd Vanessa Cato
SIAS Inspector No:

School Context

Northaw is a small rural school in an attractive setting. It serves the village community, although most pupils come from surrounding areas because it is a Church of England school. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a few from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Northaw School as a Church of England school are good.

There is a good Christian ethos underpinning the life of the school. Its Christian character and values are an integral part of school life, supporting the view that this area is good. The commitment and leadership of the Headteacher, staff and governors, its strong partnership with the church, and its compassionate, caring environment enable the school to be a place where all children have the opportunity to work and grow as individuals and as responsible members of a community.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the Headteacher and the Governing Body to the school's Church Foundation and to the development of its Christian character.
- The partnership with the Church at local and diocesan levels, with other denominations and faith communities.
- The commitment to the continuing development and improvement of Religious Education and Collective Worship.

Focus for development

- Focus the development and improvement of Religious Education in the areas of assessment especially self-evaluation and effective marking so that pupils' become more able to express with confidence how what they learn and discuss affects their lives.
- Involve staff and governors in reviewing the SEF and making use of it as a valuable tool for the continuing development of Northaw as a Church School.

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

Evidence indicates that an extensive range of Christian values underpin the life of the school and help to give “a warm and very inclusive atmosphere where all the pupils are supported and cared for very well” (Ofsted 2009). This is reflected in pupils’ positive attitudes to the school, their work and one another and in good behaviour. There is some visual evidence of the Christian character of the school in the crosses displayed and it is explicit in the Mission Statement, which is also clearly displayed. Governors spoke of the school as being “unashamedly a Christian school”. There seems to be good support in spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) areas, preparing children well for both lifelong learning and living responsibly in society. Ofsted notes the “strong ethos of care and respect (that) permeates the work of the school”. Through its strong links with the local church and community, the school helps pupils to develop an understanding of their place in the local community. Ofsted comments that pupils are encouraged “to value and understand people’s differences, beliefs and lifestyles”. The school has identified a need to develop global links and the SEF indicates links are in the process of being developed. There are good links with the local community especially through art, gardening and the Scout Association.

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

Pupils seem to enjoy worship and respond to it positively, though feedback forms are lacking in open-ended questions. All children regardless of religious background or of no faith seem to be happy to attend school worship. No children are withdrawn from worship by their parents. Evidence indicates that pupils have many opportunities for active engagement and participation and quiet reflection. There is good planning, using a variety of resources and styles of worship, including key elements of Anglican tradition and practice. Teaching staff attend most worship, but do not lead on a regular basis. The school worships weekly at St Thomas’ Church. Many families attend these and some other acts of Collective Worship. The incumbent leads services regularly in school (currently the church is in vacancy and this role is undertaken by an able and enthusiastic Reader). With the previous incumbent a school Eucharist was introduced. This has been an enriching and ecumenical experience. Pupils, parents and visitors seem to be positive about the impact CW has on pupils’ everyday lives. Some opportunities also exist for prayer during the rest of the school day. Governing Body meetings begin and end with prayer.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious Education has improved since the last inspection. Pupils behave, enjoy learning and engage well with the subject, especially in class discussion. The school makes good use of local places of worship to enhance learning about the different faiths and denominations. Teaching comes from solid knowledge and good preparation, with a variety of activity aimed at different learning styles and abilities. I observed several opportunities to learn from religion, with some children able to relate the points raised to themselves. The children to whom I spoke feel RE helps them in their ordinary lives, though few were able to expand on this. There is some indication that helping pupils to understand the religious significance of some lessons is an area for continuing improvement. Ofsted indicates most teaching “presents pupils with a good level of challenge”, but that not all teachers encourage self-evaluation among pupils or mark with reference to the pupils’ learning targets. This would seem to be reflected in RE. Annual monitoring of RE lessons is undertaken by the Headteacher, while regular reviews of workbooks, teaching and learning take place informally in the staffroom. The Headteacher makes good use of diocesan training and occasional RE Inset takes place in house.

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

Evidence indicates that the school's status as a Church school has become central to its ethos, through the leadership of the Headteacher and support of staff, governors and Vicar. The school's Christian character is promoted as an integral part of its everyday life, providing a compassionate, caring environment in which to work and grow. This has had an impact on the school community itself and upon its local popularity among those looking for a good primary school. Good links with the local church nourish and support the school well. As a result, leadership and management of the school as a church school continue to be good in line with the overall leadership and management judgement in the recent Ofsted report. There is evidence that the school makes good use of CPD, including that offered by the diocese, for both staff and governors and ensures that staff and parents are aware of the school's Christian character and the importance of this aspect in the life of the school. There is an awareness of the need for the Governing Body to be fully involved in reviewing the SEF and making use of it as a valuable tool for the continuing development of Northaw as a Church School.

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