



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Offley Endowed Primary School
School Lane, Great Offley, Hitchin SG5 3AT

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	Thursday 10 July 2008
Previous S23 Inspection:	26 – 29 January 2004
URN:	117445
Headteacher:	Karen Slack
SIAS Inspector Name:	Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No:	484

School Context

Offley Endowed is a small, voluntary aided primary school, set in pleasant rural surroundings, serving the village of Great Offley and neighbouring parishes. Pupils come from a range of social backgrounds and attainment on entry, though variable from year to year, is broadly average. The numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with the national average and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low. The school benefits from well maintained buildings and the recent addition of an attractive outside area in which to develop the outdoor curriculum for younger pupils. There is an independently run pre-school on the same site.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Offley Endowed Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Offley Endowed is a good Church school, which provides a safe and secure environment in which pupils can develop. The good quality acts of worship and the good teaching and learning which takes place in Religious Education encourage pupils to think in some depth about the world in which they live and there are many opportunities to relate what they have learned to their own lives. There is a well-developed family atmosphere and good relationships and teamwork contribute well to this. Relationships with the Church and the local clergy are developing, following a lengthy interregnum.

Established strengths

- The clear vision of the headteacher and governors for the development of the school as a Church school;
- The good relationships and teamwork at all levels;
- The good quality acts of worship which underpin the school's Christian vision;
- The effective teaching and learning in Religious Education, which is well matched to the age and ability of pupils.

Focus for development

- Establish the consistent use of symbols – e.g. a candle or a cross – as a focal point and as a means of signalling the start and end of worship, during all acts of worship;
- Further develop and strengthen ways in which the Church and clergy can support the school;
- Develop planning to include reference to attainment levels consistently, in order to challenge pupils to achieve the highest possible levels in RE.

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

This is because pupils feel valued and enjoy school. Offley is a school where every child really does matter and as a result, all treat one another with justice and respect. Pupils say that school is a secure place, where they feel happy. Staff model and promote Christian values and as a result, pupils treat one another with genuine courtesy and thought. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop independence and the effective School Council is a notable example of this. Older pupils look after their younger counterparts well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and many opportunities for quiet reflection are built into the school day, enabling pupils to take time to consider the wonder and beauty of the world around them. Younger pupils are encouraged to grow plants and to harvest food from them, providing a rich start to their understanding of the environment in which they live. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop an understanding of other cultures and this is reflected in displays, for example the *Africa Day* display in the school's entrance. Many opportunities were observed during the inspection for pupils to work co-operatively and to consider the feelings of others; pupils have a wide vocabulary with which to discuss their feelings, nurtured by the school's effective values education and PSHCE programmes. There is a strong family atmosphere, which encourages all to work together, leading one parent to write: "...children really feel part of a community, who help each other and value school, village life and the world around them". The buildings are well maintained and evidence of its Christian character is visible throughout the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

This is because worship occupies a key place in the life of the school and reflects its Christian character well. Acts of worship are stimulating and pupils respond well to the range of experiences on offer. Values shared in worship impact well on the daily lives of pupils within the school, who go about their business in a calm and thoughtful manner. Acts of worship are well planned and feedback from pupils is used effectively to evaluate their impact and adjust provision. Pupils are actively involved in worship through prayer, song, drama and responding to questions. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers and use these at other points during the day. Worship is well matched to the needs and ages of learners and staff lead acts of worship on a weekly basis specifically tailored to the needs of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils. These are effective, but would benefit from the consistent use of a focus – for example a candle or a cross – as a focal point and as a means to signal the start and end of worship. As a result of the good provision, pupils know about the key festivals of the Christian year and use the Lord's Prayer as part of worship. Links with the local Church and clergy are gaining in strength, following a lengthy interregnum and there are plans for these to be further developed. Good use is made of the Church for services at key points in the year and parents are appreciative of the opportunity to share in these times of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards in Religious Education (RE) are good and pupils attain well for their age and ability. This is because lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectations. As a result of good teaching and the effective support of teaching assistants, pupils make good progress in RE and their attitudes to learning are good. However, progress would be even more rapid if teachers' planning were to make reference to levels of attainment more consistently. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on what they learn and to relate this to feelings and their own daily lives – for example, in a lesson observed during the inspection, pupils were encouraged to understand how Moses and Aaron felt, following Moses' receiving of the Ten Commandments. Younger pupils are encouraged to think about the mysteries of life and relate this to their own experience, leading one Reception aged child to write: "*God helps us get up and he helps us get well. His hands look like flowers, because he likes planting*". They were also well prepared for the end of term visit to Church through a PowerPoint presentation of "*Barnaby Bear's Visit to Church*", which was effective in making the lesson relevant to their age and experience. Systems for assessing RE are good. As a result of the good provision for RE, pupils have a good understanding of the Christian faith and other belief systems and are able to make links between them. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic subject leader, who takes advantage of a full range of opportunities for ongoing professional development, particularly those provided by the Diocese.

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

This is because the school's Christian ethos is clear in all that the school does and is reflected in its key documentation and in the relationships within the school. Its Christian ethos is part of its everyday life, leading one parent to comment: "*Children are brought up and taught in a Christian way, without forcing religion on them*". The headteacher has been particularly effective in promoting the school's Christian character and in this she has been well supported by staff and governors. Governors have been closely involved in the school's self-evaluation as a Church school and have a clear strategic view of its development in this area. There is a strong emphasis on inclusion and effective systems are in place for transition and induction, which are much appreciated by parents. Parents and other stakeholders are overwhelmingly positive about the school and links with the community and church are growing in strength. Pupils have many opportunities to become involved in charitable giving and develop a good understanding of their place in the wider global community.