

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Branch Road, Park Street, St Albans AL2 2LX

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Dates of inspection:	12 th December 2011
Date of last inspection:	11 th January 2007
School's unique reference number:	117452
Headteacher:	Jenny Russell (Acting)
Inspector's name and number:	Alan Thornsby 137

School context

Park Street is an average sized primary school with most pupils from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, although the proportion with statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Following the retirement of the long serving headteacher, the deputy has been acting headteacher. A new headteacher will take up post in January 2012.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Park Street as a Church of England school are good.

The acting headteacher has successfully led the school, ensuring that Christian character has been maintained and its many strengths have continued to be developed. Pupils are securely nurtured in a distinctively Christian learning environment where worship and religious education are central to the successful academic and personal development of pupils.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the acting headteacher, staff and governing body to the ongoing development of the school as a caring Christian community
- The impact of the ethos of the school on the academic and personal development of pupils.
- The quality of worship and religious education that are central to the Christian character of the school.
- The secure links with Holy Trinity church

Focus for development

- Ensure the implicit Christian values that underpin the school are made explicit, especially in displays
- Ensure children make a greater contribution to the planning and delivery of worship
- Continue to improve standards in religious education through a consistent use of differentiated tasks

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

Park Street is a welcoming and inclusive school where Christian values in action drive the daily life of the school. Pupils understand that their school is special because of links with the church, the importance of Christian values and the links throughout the curriculum made with worship and religious education (RE). They recognise that these links impact the way 'we all treat each other and the way that we wish to be treated.' Pupils articulate the links between the 'rainbow rules' that underpin the behaviour policy of the school and the rainbow as God's promise. Relationships between the staff and pupils are good because staff are effective role models of values in action. This is also reflected in the care and consideration shown by older pupils to younger siblings. Children understand the need for the rewards and sanctions procedures that reinforce positive behaviour and adults work hard to ensure these are effective. Rainbow rules in each class and rainbow bricks in younger classes recognise good deeds that result in 'rainbow time' for good behaviour and attitudes. Rigorous monitoring and tracking enables staff to provide challenge and support for all pupils who make above average progress. Pupils express their opinions through the school forum and Eco team 'to share our views and help the school and the environment to be better.' Throughout the school there are displays that reinforce its distinctive character. However, many of these relate to RE and bible stories and fail to give pupils sufficient opportunities to reflect on explicit Christian values or moral learning of the story.

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

Worship is a key part of the school day that gives pupils a good, developing knowledge of the Bible. The well-written policy includes guidelines, a list of themes linked to biblical references and ideas for development. The headteacher and foundation governors monitor worship to ensure that planning is being followed. Discussions by the headteacher, senior leadership team, foundation governors and vicar, supplemented by written responses from pupils inform future planning. Pupils enjoy worship because of the lively delivery of leaders, especially the vicar who uses a range of ventriloquist puppets and voices to engage all pupils. Although worship is made fun and enjoyable because of the effective use of quizzes and games, as well as references to pupils' own experiences, leaders ensure that children understand the purpose of worship. Pupils have a good understanding of the structure of the bible as well as bible stories because in Year 3 they are presented with a bible by the church. This is regularly used during worship to follow bible readings by the vicar. Worship has a high profile in the daily life of the school, with lunchtime and end of day prayers said in every class. School and class prayers displayed in each classroom reinforce this. Pupils created a 'birthday song' as an aspect of sharing and celebrating achievement. Although children often confidently share readings or prayers, as well as taking part in role-play dramatisations, they are not given sufficient opportunities to plan or lead worship. The church is used for Easter and Harvest services, although the walk to church involves older pupils taking responsibility for younger peers and support from parents and the local police to ensure safety.

The impact of religious education is good.

Religious Education (RE) has a high profile in the school with an annual policy review and action plan that is carefully monitored to ensure continuing, successful development, for example ensuring a balance of learning about and learning from religion. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable coordinator maintains an overview through monitoring teachers' planning, pupils' books and lesson observations. This is followed by regular feedback to staff, sharing individual and whole school findings. She keeps ahead of developments by regularly attending diocesan courses and sharing new knowledge with staff. Pupils' interest in RE is maintained through a creative approach with cross-curricular links. Strengths of the school are the well planned Easter and Christmas themes that enable the whole school to share the same theme from a different and age appropriate perspective. Assessment, at the end of units of work are informed by levelled work samples, showing that standards in RE are comparable to those in literacy. Lessons are good because of teacher knowledge, sound creative planning and the skilful use of questioning to develop the thinking of pupils. Teaching assistants are often effectively used to record the oral contributions of individual children. Pupils make good use of their existing knowledge to develop their thinking and understanding. For example, pupils in Year 5 used previous knowledge of the story of Hanukkah to explore how it is celebrated. In a year 2 class pupils used their knowledge of the good news brought by the angels to the shepherds to create their own good news messages for the world. Year 1 children were able to make links between the Christingles they had made and the festival of Divali. This was a result of one of the class members sharing her beliefs and customs. Work in books is well presented and teachers often make marking comments about learning or ask questions to further learning. However, across the school there is an inconsistent use of differentiated tasks to challenge the different abilities of pupils.

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

The acting headteacher and deputy have successfully led the school to ensure that ongoing development has continued. Adults are aware of the school's distinctive Christian character. However, although Christian values are at the heart of the school and are shared by staff and governors to inform decision making, they are currently not given the explicit profile in displays as suggested by the practice and policy. Foundation governors maintain links with the church and an overview of the distinctive character because of their high expectations and involvement in monitoring and evaluation. This is enhanced by regular reports from the headteacher and RE coordinator and with discussions and questionnaires informs the accurate self-evaluation and the school development plan. Involvement in the processes to appoint a substantive head teacher has ensured that all governors are aware of the characteristics of a distinctive church school and the qualities required by a leader. Parents are proud of the school and praise the impact of the school on the behaviour and attitudes of their children. Typical comments from parents include 'this inclusive school brings everyone together with a great sense of belonging and understanding of other people and belief.' They also recognise the 'excellent pastoral care and moral principles that allow self expression.' There are strong links with the local community and Anglican and Baptist churches. The prayer group from the churches that meets regularly in school strengthens this link.