



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Potten End Church of England First School
Church Road, Potten End, Berkhamsted HP4 2QY**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 9th April 2008
Previous S23 Inspection: March 2005
URN: 117414
Headteacher: Jane Senior
SIAS Inspector Name: Alan Thornsby
SIAS Inspector No: NS 137

School Context

Potten End is a small first school that serves the local area and takes many pupils from the towns of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead. The majority of pupils are White British. The school currently shares nursery accommodation with a private provider and the building of its own nursery unit is about to begin.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Potten End First School as a Church of England school are good.

Potten End is a good school with many strong features. There is great commitment from all to ensure pupils have a caring and secure learning situation. This allows them to develop academically and personally in a Christian atmosphere.

Established strengths

- The headteacher's leadership of the welcoming ethos of the school that creates a sense of belonging for everyone
- The excellent relationships that promote respect throughout the school community
- The commitment of the staff to nurturing pupils personal development

Focus for development

- Formalise the processes for monitoring and evaluating worship.
- Explore church school distinctiveness to inform the school development plan

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

The welcome to visitors from adults and children alike shows the care, love and respect that underpin the ethos of this school. For example the head takes time every morning to greet and talk to individual children as they arrive at school each day. Christian values are clearly evident in the daily life of the school. Their impact on the lives and routines of the school is reflected in the ability of pupils to make clear links between these and the teaching of Jesus. School routines extend to life at home for example some pupils have begun to say grace before a meal. Families who have experienced particular difficulties are given ongoing and sensitive support. There are excellent relationships between all members of the community and pupils rightly say 'We are like a big family'. This results in new pupils quickly becoming established in the school and pupils helping each other when there is a need. Children do their best because they are challenged and nurtured to achieve well by adults in school. Children are mature, articulate and well behaved and show confidence and politeness in speaking to each other and adults. They understand the need for respect for each other by making comments such as 'Here we laugh with and not at each other'. They speak confidently and proudly about having friends from other faiths and explain 'We can talk to each other about our beliefs and learn from each other'. Displays are effectively used to make links between Christian values, everyday life and areas of the curriculum. Pupils' spiritual awareness is deepened through the use of the school garden to understand cycles of growth and change. Links with Uganda and Romania allow pupils to show their understanding of less fortunate people by supporting a number of charities.

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

Worship is an important part of school by setting the tone for the rest of the school day. It is planned following the diocesan worship Lectionary. Pupils are responsible for writing comments each day as an informal evaluation and governors provide further evaluation during the termly drop-in week. These are used to inform future development. However there is no formal system of evaluation in place at present. Pupils are responsible for the choice and setting up of suitable music that help them all to create a reverent atmosphere. All pupils are engaged by the lively delivery. They listen well and offer willing responses. Pupils explain the value of worship as a time 'to learn how to behave and respect other people'. They understand how stories, particularly from the Bible, have powerful moral messages. Pupils make clear links with their learning in religious education to enhance worship. Worship themes are discussed in the classroom often using talk partners. Even the youngest children ask 'big questions' such as 'Was Jesus' mummy sad when he died?' Pupils have a good understanding of the church year and the relevance to their own lives. They explain for example how they have the opportunity to share with each other what they are giving up for Lent. They have a good awareness of the value of prayer as 'a time to talk with God and ask for help or to say sorry'. The importance of the Lord's Prayer is seen in the display at the front of the hall and the confident way everyone recites it. The weekly act of worship led by the vicar, the use of the church for Festival services and the monthly services in church give children a good sense of belonging to a worshipping community. This is developed even more when pupils lead worship themselves, either in school or church.

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

The head has a clear vision for the development of pupils through being part of a caring and nurturing community. Pupils benefit from a united staff team committed to academic and personal development. Several members of the governing body are newly appointed. They enthusiastically carry out their roles, have benefited from training to become effective critical friends and have already made suggestions for the development of the school. Governors carry out monitoring and evaluation of the school when they visit during termly 'drop-in' weeks. The headteacher and staff make an accurate evaluation of the school as a church school. This is supported by foundation governors who report on observations of worship and promote the links with the church. This process does not yet feed into the school development plan. Reports made by individual governors are fed back during governors meetings. The school has a good capacity to continue to develop. Parents appreciate the open door policy and approachability of the school. They are justly proud of the school and the impact of its ethos that gives a Christian profile to the lives of their children. The school has good links with the local community through the church and Allotment Society who share knowledge and produce with the pupils.