



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Ravensden CofE Voluntary Aided Lower School**  
**Vicarage Close, Church End, Ravensden MK44 2RW**

**Diocese of St Albans**

**LA:** Bedfordshire  
**SIAS Inspection:** 16 November 2007  
**Previous S23 Inspection:** 12 and 14 February 2002  
**URN:** 109623  
**Headteacher:** Mr Paul Stanyard  
**SIAS Inspector Name:** Mr Bob Hopcraft  
**SIAS Inspector No:** 484

### School Context

Ravensden is a much smaller than average lower school, situated in a pleasant rural location, close to the county town of Bedford. A small proportion of pupils come from the village, with the majority travelling in from surrounding areas. The school has good before and after school provision, which is a popular service with both parents and pupils. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are fewer pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than the average. In the past three years there has been a high turnover in teaching staff.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ravensden CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are good.**

Ravensden is a good Church school that promotes its Christian character well. The headteacher plays a key part in this, steering the school effectively through the recent changes in teaching staff and ensuring that the strong Christian ethos underpins all that the school does. As a result, relationships and teamwork within the school are good and are an important part of its success. There are very strong links with the local Church which further nourish and support its Christian vision and parents are very supportive of the school's ethos.

### Established strengths

- The vision of the headteacher for the school as a Christian community;
- The strong support of parents for the school's Christian ethos;
- Good relationships and teamwork at all levels;
- Strong and supportive links with the local Church and clergy.

### Focus for development

- Develop a system for ensuring that the quality and impact of collective worship is formally evaluated;
- Develop assessment within RE, to ensure that pupils are clear about their next steps in learning and that written work accurately reflects their levels of understanding.

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

This is because all learners feel valued and special and are encouraged to reach their full potential. Strong Christian values underpin all that the school does and this is reflected in the excellent relationships at all levels. As one parent wrote: *"It is a warm, friendly, inviting school with kind, caring staff who are able to bring out the best in the children"*. Pupils demonstrate a high level of self esteem and confidence at all ages and the effective School Council provides a good vehicle for helping to develop this. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good and they have a well-informed understanding of other faiths and cultures. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, which is well supported by the school's general ethos and by the focus on Values Education which is evident in displays around the school. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to belong to it. The newly refurbished buildings provide a bright and comfortable environment in which to learn and the school's Christian foundation is clearly reflected both within the buildings and in the school's published materials.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school and the daily acts of collective worship affirm and support its Christian character well. Acts of worship are well planned, varied and stimulating and some leave a lasting impact on pupils. These acts of worship are carried out in an atmosphere of thoughtfulness and respect, providing opportunities for the active participation of pupils as well as times for quiet reflection and deeper thought. As a result, pupils respond well and can talk at some length about the positive worshipping experiences they have had. Particular favourites are the weekly visits by the "Open the Book" group and the local clergy. Good use is made of prayer and song and pupils are encouraged to reflect on what the theme of worship means for them in their own lives. Regular visits are made to the local Church for worship during the year and these visits are well supported by parents. While the school keeps a record of acts of worship, it does not currently evaluate their quality and impact in any formal way.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**

This is because in discussion, pupils demonstrate an understanding of Christianity and other world religions which is above that expected for their age. However, this understanding is not always reflected in their written work and there are currently no effective assessment procedures to support pupils to understand their next steps in learning and to help staff to plan for these accurately. Nonetheless, pupils make good progress in their understanding and the quality of teaching is good. RE lessons provide a good range of activities which are well differentiated and encourage pupils to develop their understanding and relate themes to their own lives; for example, during a lesson about Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah in the Jewish faith, pupils were asked to consider how they would feel in such circumstances. Through the well structured RE syllabus, pupils are taught to show respect and thought for those from other faiths and opportunities for the development of spiritual and moral education are taken whenever possible. The school has good resources for RE and the school development plan has a section outlining clear developments for the subject.

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

Parents, governors and staff are clear about the school's Christian status and this is reflected in its published aims and documentation. The headteacher has played a central role in driving forward the school's Christian vision and in this he has been ably supported by the governors. The school has completed a detailed self-evaluation of its effectiveness as a Church school and, as a result, has accurately identified areas for future development. Staff are fully supportive of the school's Christian ethos and there is strong evidence of effective teamwork and a shared vision. Parents and other stakeholders are very supportive of the school and share a clear understanding of its Christian status and what this means in terms of relationships and commitment to the wellbeing of their children. There are very strong links with the local Church and community and good support is received from the clergy. The dizzying range of charities which the school has supported in recent years reflects its outward-looking nature and its genuine commitment to an understanding of the needs of others.