



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Renhold CofE VC Lower School**  
**Church End, Renhold, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 0LU**

**Diocese of St Albans**

**LA:** Bedfordshire  
**SIAS Inspection:** Friday 7 March 2008  
**Previous S23 Inspection:** 29 November – 1 December 2004  
**URN:** 109603  
**Headteacher:** Mrs E J Ferguson  
**SIAS Inspector Name:** Bob Hopcraft  
**SIAS Inspector No:** 484

### School Context

Renhold CofE VC Lower School is a smaller than average sized school set in a pleasant rural landscape to the east of Bedford. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected nationally. Numbers of pupils in the school are steadily increasing, reflecting its success and popularity. The school benefits from attractive modern and well-maintained buildings and is extremely well resourced.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Renhold CofE VC Lower School as a Church of England school are Outstanding.

Renhold CofE VC Lower School is an outstanding Church school that encourages the best in all its pupils. Relationships are outstanding at all levels and Christian values and respect underpin all that the school does. The innovative and exciting curriculum ensures that all pupils are well catered for and the school is inclusive in every respect. Renhold is a school where every child really does matter and the quality of the extended school provision reinforces and supports the school's focus on the needs and talents of each individual child.

### Established strengths

- The clear vision of the headteacher and established governors for the school as a Church school;
- The outstanding guidance and care provided for each pupil and the school's inclusive nature;
- The high quality acts of worship, which encourage active participation and enjoyment;
- The outstanding relationships at all levels;
- The opportunities for cultural and spiritual development, which encourage in pupils a strong empathy for others and the world around them.

### Focus for development

- Build on the current informal assessment of acts of collective worship to ensure that the quality and impact are formally monitored and evaluated;
- Further develop the role of new governors so that they are able to monitor and evaluate the development of the school as a Church school.

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

This is because all learners feel valued and special. All pupils are encouraged to meet their potential through an innovative, skills-based curriculum, which genuinely focuses on excellence and enjoyment. As a result, every child really does matter at Renhold and all are encouraged to do and be the best they can, whatever their background and talents. All are treated with justice and respect and relationships are of the highest quality at all levels. Pupils are happy, secure and confident and have considerable opportunities to develop responsibility and independence. A good example of this is the effective School Council, which enables pupils to develop and practice skills in citizenship and to boost levels of self-esteem and maturity. Christian values underpin the work of the school and these have been further strengthened recently by the use of the *SEAL* materials, which promote the social and emotional aspects of learning. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Opportunities for spiritual development are included in teachers' plans and pupils are encouraged to think how they would feel in given situations – for example, if they were standing in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on Christmas morning. A range of organised visits and visitors, such as the recent trip to the Hindu Mandir, promote and develop pupils' cultural understanding in a practical and meaningful way. There is a strong team ethos and pupils and staff support one another well; as a result, behaviour is good, with a focus on understanding and forgiveness. The bright, exciting and well cared-for learning environment supports learning well and a range of displays reflect the school's focus on moral and cultural themes. The signs and symbols of the Christian religion are visible throughout the school, ensuring that there is no doubt about the school's Christian foundation.

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

Worship plays a central part in the life of the school and comments such as “...it is a time when we talk to and learn about God” indicate that pupils are clear about the core purpose of the daily act of worship. Acts of worship are carefully planned around a range of themes: as a result they are inspiring, of high quality and well matched to the age and ability of all groups of pupils. Pupils have, and take, many opportunities to be actively involved in worship and staff, all of who lead worship, often plan innovative and interesting activities, such as washing a pupil's feet to demonstrate the importance of this act in Christ's time. The school has undertaken some informal evaluation of the quality and impact of collective worship, but this has not yet been done in any formal way. Silence and times for quiet reflection are actively recognised and promoted as a means of encouraging spiritual development and prayer plays a central part in worship. There are often strong links between worship and the curriculum and themes are further expanded in lessons: an example of this is the act of worship on the theme of *choice* which was observed during the inspection and later followed up in an RE lesson in year 3. A range of modern and traditional songs are used to enhance worship and support pupils' understanding. There are very good links with the local church and the priest in charge plays an active part in the pastoral and worshipping life of the school. Pupils have taken part in a Eucharist service, which provided a particularly inspiring and moving experience, both for members of the school and the parish.

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

This is because the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and her staff consistently promote the school's Christian ethos and model it at all times as a preparation for life and living. All stakeholders are clear that Renhold is a Church school of high quality and the school's Christian foundation is celebrated in all its public documentation. The strong emphasis on teamwork encourages all to be involved in guiding and directing the school's developing vision and results in high levels of trust between staff and pupils. All staff are involved in regular assessment of the school's aims and vision and ongoing professional development relating to the promotion of the school's Christian character. Recent changes to the governing body means that some governors are new to the post and are yet to be involved in formal evaluation of the school as a Church school; established governors continue to support and nourish the school's development well. Strengths and areas for development are clearly identified and the school's development plan contains detailed plans for its development as a Church school. The views of parents are sought regularly and the responses of parents to the Church school questionnaire were universally positive. These reflected a clear understanding of the school's Christian foundation, encouraging one parent to write “*The school is a caring community and the children feel secure and valued by all within it. The Christian ethos is very strong throughout the school*”. Links with the local church are very strong and the priest in charge views the school as a very positive part of her commitment to the parish. The school promotes strong links with the local and global community and pupils are given every opportunity to be actively involved in charitable giving.