



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Church Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth WD3 8HD

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	1st October 2007
Previous S23 Inspection:	April 2005
URN:	117448
Headteacher:	Philippa Golding
SIAS Inspector Name:	Lyn Field
SIAS Inspector No:	151

School Context

St Peter's is a primary school of average size and serves a residential area of Rickmansworth. Pupils generally come from backgrounds that are socially and economically favourable and their attainment when they start school is above average. A few pupils speak English as a second language.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are satisfactory

St Peter's is entering a new stage in its development. Improvements in teaching and learning are now secure and the senior staff are developing the curriculum to enrich children's experience of the world in which they live. The headteacher has a passionate understanding of how this can happen in the context of being a Christian community. Her vision and the partnerships growing with the local community indicate a strong capacity to become a highly effective church school.

Established strengths

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the Christian distinctiveness of the school
- Collective worship makes a strong impact on children's spiritual and moral development
- The impact of the foundation stage curriculum on children's personal development

Focus for development

- To implement the current plans for creative projects to support spiritual development
- To sharpen the focus of monitoring in RE to give a clear basis for staff training
- To set priorities for development as a church school as part of strategic planning

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

The progress that all pupils make in their learning has significantly improved over the last two years. Two areas of school life, collective worship and the foundation stage, are making a notable difference to pupils' personal development. In the drive to raise standards, however, some initiatives in the areas of spiritual and cultural development have not been sustained. For example, the reflection areas in some classrooms are not used to engage children's interest. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear vision for how the curriculum can be shaped to reflect the Christian foundation of the school and to challenge pupils' awareness of humanity. Some of these ideas such as linking Black History Week with the Arts and the introduction of philosophical thinking are well chosen to help pupils develop broader skills in their learning. In Foundation stage a good model exists for imaginative projects that enrich children's spiritual growth in all subjects. Pupils are kind to each other and recognise listening as an important quality in good relationships. This reflects the Christian ethos of the school even though they have yet to reach the stage of drawing on Christian values to explain their actions. The balance between pastoral and professional support is fundamental to the headteacher's leadership and the well being of staff is seen as a key factor in effective teaching. Parents and children know their views are taken seriously because changes are made in response to questionnaires. These are managed carefully so there is no compromise to the school's Christian purpose. Class assemblies, for example, are being reorganised to enable more parents to attend but the daily act of worship retains a distinctive time in the day.

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

Worship has real meaning for children because it brings faith into the context of their daily lives. A clear distinction is made between the time of worship and assembly activities. These are skilfully dovetailed together to challenge children in their thinking and help them grow spiritually and morally. The Friday 'What's in the news?' assembly raises issues of human concern at both a local and world wide level. These discussions stay with children and they bring them into other lessons later in the following week. Where this happens and there is further time for reflection, the impact of worship is greater. The school is aware that this is not consistently happening in all classes. The prayers that pupils write are all read out in worship but with sensitivity towards each individual. This carries the strong message that the concerns of each individual are important to the whole school and to God. One pupil described how she felt respected and valued when her prayer was shared. Worship has a different style and focus for each day of the week. Pupils enjoy this variety and respond well to the simple rituals and signing that create a special atmosphere. The staff are helpful role models and there is a strong sense of the school coming together as a worshipping community.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

The school has reached a stage in its development where there are plans in place to raise the profile of RE to that of a core subject. General improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school has made a difference in RE, particularly in the quality of questioning. Where teaching is good, children can make use of what they have learned previously. This is because the objectives for the lessons are focused on developing religious understanding. The links made to current affairs and collective worship help pupils explore how faith affects the way people live their lives. They enjoy studying different faiths and say they have been surprised by the common themes they have discovered. The standards that pupils achieve are higher in Key Stage 1 as older pupils have significant gaps in their

knowledge because of the way the subject has been taught in the past. This makes it difficult for them to deal with the tasks that are set. Teachers are quite rightly moving away from weekly written tasks to using activities in a range of media but it is too early to evaluate the impact of this. Assessment has been introduced but changes of staff mean there is not a secure understanding of how to use the criteria to identify the level each pupil is achieving. A programme of monitoring is in place but in her enthusiasm, the co-ordinator is attempting to cover too many areas at once. The scrutiny of planning and the observation of lessons do not focus sufficiently well on the impact that teaching has on children's learning. This makes it difficult for the school to decide what to prioritise for attention.

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

The headteacher has a clear and passionate vision for how the Christian ethos of the school makes a difference to how well pupils learn. This is fully shared by the deputy and assistant heads and together they are already shaping a distinctively Christian curriculum. Parents have remained loyal to the school through a period of instability and clearly value its Christian status. It was this fundamental confidence that the community showed in the school, following the headteacher's appointment, that maintained the momentum towards improvement. Strong links with the church have continued, worship now has a significant impact on the whole community and links with other faiths and Christian denominations are growing. The chair of governors and five other governors are new in post and they clearly bring a strong commitment to Christian values as the basis for making decisions. As foundation governors, however, they have yet to explore their specific responsibilities and are not involved in evaluating the school as a church school. This means that clear priorities for its Christian distinctiveness do not form part of the school's strategic planning. The Diocese has played a key part in the school's journey over the last two years and is now in a position to give support in specific areas of the school's work.

SIAS report October 2007 St Peter's Rickmansworth WD3 8HD