

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Roxton Church of England VA Lower School
School Lane
Roxton
Bedford
MK44 3DR

Diocese: St Albans

Local Authority:	Bedford Borough
Date of inspection:	26/27 March 2013
Date of last inspection:	20 May 2008
School's unique reference number:	109625
Headteacher:	Mrs Jane Trott
Inspector's name and number:	Mrs Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

Roxton is a small, rural school serving the villages of Roxton, Wyboston, Chawston and Tempsford. At the time of this inspection the school was in the middle of a building project to improve the entrance, office and foundation stage facilities. The school currently has 61 pupils on roll. There are close links with the Parish of St Mary Magdalene and Alban Church of England Academy, the feeder middle school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Roxton VA Lower School as a Church of England school is outstanding.

Roxton Church of England VA Primary School can be proud of the progress it has made since its last inspection. As a small school, the school's distinctive Christian character is now evident in every aspect of school life and the outstanding way it clearly meets the needs of all learners. The standards achieved and progress made by all pupils as well as the quality of the teaching and learning make this a popular school.

Established strengths

- The strong Christian vision and ethos which permeates all aspects of the school
- The Christian family atmosphere and quality of relationships across the school
- The impact of the values education programme which underpins the school's ethos and curriculum
- The strong links with the parish church of St Mary Magdalene

Focus for development

- Ensure that the new RE syllabus is firmly embedded into the curriculum to provide continuity and progression across the school
- Develop links with other Christian denominations and other faith communities
- Improve opportunities for pupils' cultural development

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

Roxton is becoming a vibrant and exciting place to grow and work. The essence of the school's Christian ethos is seen in the everyday actions, the personal interactions and family atmosphere that permeate the life of the school. The recent work on Christian values is having a significant impact on the pupils, their learning, behaviour and spiritual, moral and social development. It has become a foundation for every aspect of school life and the curriculum. Pupils were eager to explain about the values tree in the hall and other displays in the classrooms. All those interviewed were passionate about their school, the staff and the way in which they feel, safe, valued and cared for. As one pupil said the teachers are 'helpful, caring, kind and always listen to us'. Pupils speak with pride about how older pupils support the younger ones and the bus stop buddy system.

There is an active school council with an appointed chair. They have their own minutes and agendas and were eager to show and talk about their School Council File. They speak positively about being at a church school, their school badge and the visits to the church. Some pupils explained how they were looking forward to improving weather so that they could use the new castle and shelters in the playground to play and meet together. As one pupil said 'This school has a great environment'.

The school supports several charities throughout the year. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the Christmas shoebox and the Children in Need appeals.

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The individual reflective areas in the classrooms and the hall are well used by the pupils for prayer as well as for reflection in different curriculum areas. Pupils' cultural awareness is less developed but plans are in place to address this and to develop more links with other faiths and cultures. The school has already developed a link with a school in Australia where a pupil has recently emigrated.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding.

Worship plays a central role in the life of the school. The headteacher, who is responsible for the collective worship and music in the school has had a huge impact on the quality of worship provided.

Pupils speak positively about their opportunities for prayer and worship. They enjoy the special times for reflection and prayer in both worship and the planned curriculum. The 'Good Friday' reflection in year 2/3 was both powerful and challenging for this age group.

The vicar is known and respected by the pupils, who speak fondly about the worship in the parish church of St Mary Magdalene which takes place every two weeks.

At the time of this inspection the major focus was on Easter. The Easter service in the church was well attended by parents. Many spoke positively about the way the new headteacher was developing the school as a church school and the positive effect the values education programme was having on the ways in which the pupils behaved and respected each other.

The violin medley played at the service was exceptional for such young pupils as was the quality of the singing. Parents and siblings listened intently to what were some very moving pieces which included dance, readings and hymns.

Worship is carefully planned across the year to incorporate the rich variety of Christian worship and Bible stories that pupils will experience during their time in the school. This is also having a significant impact on their knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and concepts.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Standards in pupils' knowledge and understanding of aspects of the Christian tradition are better than the national average. For example, the pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the Easter story. They are able to talk with enthusiasm about the events that took place, the values portrayed in the story and to discuss in depth the feelings of those involved. Standards in RE are also enhanced by the collective worship provided, the work on values education and the popular 'Little Angels' lunch time club led by the local youth worker. Attainment and progress in pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faith traditions is less secure and pupils found it hard to recall many details about other faiths studied.

The RE subject leader is passionate about RE and is working hard to develop materials in line with the new Bedford Agreed Syllabus and the rolling programme required with such a small cohort. The staff have all received training on the new syllabus to ensure pupils are given a rich experience in RE which, where possible, is linked into the wider creative curriculum. Each new unit includes the school's key learning values and opportunities for pupils' spiritual development and reflection.

At the time of this inspection teachers were still trialing the new materials and although the quality of teaching is generally good to outstanding, in some lessons too many activities and concepts were causing some confusion and hampering the pupils' overall progress. Teaching assistants were not always clear about how to interpret the required ideas and religious concepts in the same way as groups taught by the teachers.

The school is well resourced for RE and the subject leader has accessed local and diocesan CPD. This is clearly having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and pupils' perception of RE as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All pupils appreciate the wide variety of teaching and learning styles. In lessons observed, children were particularly enjoying practical activities and discussions in which they demonstrated a deeper level of thinking.

Additional support from the Diocese would ensure that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met in full and that teachers' planning is more coherent.

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

The leadership of the school is strong. The headteacher and governing body have a clear vision for the future of the school. This vision is clearly underpinned by Christian values and principles which are understood and supported by all the adults involved in the school. With the support of the governors, staff, parents, clergy and parishioners the school offers its pupils inspirational teaching and learning in an inspirational and safe Christian environment. All are excited about the completion of the new build and how this extra space might help to develop the school as a Church of England school. A stained glass window has already been ordered and plans are in place for a meeting / prayer room. The headteacher leads by example and the dedication, hard work and high expectations of all staff ensure a fun learning environment, matched with careful monitoring, rigour and challenge.

Links with the diocese and local church community are excellent .The vicar is a regular visitor to the school and there have been successful initiatives that have brought the school and church communities closer together.

RE and collective worship have a high profile within the life of the school and staff are positive about moving them forward. Links with parents are 'outstanding' and parents were full of praise for the recent improvements,('and the' or 'especially the') approachable and welcoming atmosphere created by the new headteacher.

One parent said 'the Christian spirit at Roxton Lower doesn't begin and end at the school gates. What the children learn goes home with them and into their lives outside of school and in turn into their family's lives as well...' The open, friendly and happy environment really does make the school feel like an extended family'.

SIAS report Roxton VA Church of England Lower School