

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Diocese: St Albans

Sarratt Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, The Green, Sarratt, Rickmansworth WD3 6AS

Local authority: Hertfordshire
Date of inspection: 13th March 2012
Date of last inspection: 5th February 2007
School's unique reference number: 117404
Acting Headteacher : Mr Dominic Bennetts
Inspector's name and number: Lindsay Fraser (107)

School context

Sarratt Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average primary school. Approximately two-thirds of the pupils live outside the village of Sarratt. There is on-site, privately-managed pre-school provision. Most pupils are of White British heritage and few are of minority ethnic heritage, with very few pupils at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average as are the proportions of pupils with disabilities and special needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sarratt C of E Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

During a time of change the Acting Headteacher and staff have successfully maintained an ethos which is broadly Christian. Strong values and high expectations ensure pupils behave well and make good progress. The development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education contributes well to the depth of pupils' thinking and social responsibility. The school is in the early stages of establishing its Christian identity, but the clear vision of the new Headteacher and Foundation Governor, supported by the school community, will hasten this process.

Established strengths

- The quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education developed throughout the curriculum, but especially in Religious Education.
- The excellent relationships between the school and parent body, amongst the staff, between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils.

Focus for development

- Use the recent pupils' evaluations and Diocesan training to further develop Collective Worship which will further engage all pupils.
- Build on the recent use of the church to celebrate Christian festivals to further enhance the children's experience of their Christian heritage.
- Review with governors and staff all public documentation, especially the mission statement with specific regard for the Christian status of the school.

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

'Our school accepts all religions and disabilities' was a comment made by a Year 6 pupil, summing up the remarks made by many pupils regarding the strengths of their school as a Church school. Good behaviour is a strong feature of this school, based on a clear understanding of the school's Christian values. Pupils understand how to apply these values to their day-to-day challenges and are able to manage their own conflicts. Pupils are confident and know that they can speak honestly about their beliefs and ideas and these will be valued by adults in the school. The development of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education (SMSC) is a strongly emerging aspect of this school. On the day of the inspection three lessons of Religious Education were observed in which there were many opportunities to explore issues related to SMSC, from the role play of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to a discussion in Year 5 of pupils' ideas about the nature of God and the source of their own beliefs following an exploration of Jewish beliefs. Outstanding provision for SMSC was observed in Year 6 where an excellent use of reflection, followed by an exploration of Christian and Buddhist beliefs, within an atmosphere of respect and consideration for each other, enabled pupils to express their views confidently. The opportunity for pupils to share 'big questions' in Friday Goldbook Assemblies encourages pupils to think more deeply about the world around them. Pupils appreciate their family groupings of seven pupils, one from each year group and now wish to further extend their effectiveness through a wider range of activities. The contribution of the Church youth workers, through their input to the Christmas Nativity and their leadership of Engage, the weekly Christian group for Years 5 and 6, is highly regarded by the pupils. Opportunities to celebrate, demonstrate and promote the school's Christian character, however, are often missed in school documentation and mission statement. Planning for visits to other faith communities is in its early stages. Parents are very supportive of the Christian ethos and the strong relationship of the school, the community and the church, whilst expressing the importance of pupils' first-hand experience of visiting other faiths places of worship.

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

Pupils enjoy a range of different approaches to Collective Worship during the course of the week, including the weekly visit from the local rector, who has recently taken the pupils through the learning and understanding of the Lord's Prayer and themes based on children in the Bible. The weekly singing assembly provides an opportunity to understand and reflect on the themes and words of songs, such as moral issues that arose in the songs from 'Oliver'. Many pupils requested, in their evaluations, more Bible stories and more prayers. An extremely successful Nativity in the local church led by KS1, enhanced by the use of puppets to explain the different elements, together with the ringing of the church bells to welcome the pupils, has led to a request for more of these events. This view was also supported by parents. Pupils explained enthusiastically some of the recent themes and stories and were able to relate these to their own lives. Evaluations of Collective Worship have been introduced by the Acting Headteacher. These reflect very positive attitudes which the pupils have, regarding the importance of Worship in their lives. Thoughtful comments regarding their experiences of Collective Worship will enable school leadership to involve pupils in further developing themes and in the delivery.

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

The Acting Headteacher, whose permanent position has now been confirmed, has a very clear vision for the future development of the school as a Church school and has already begun to take steps to enhance the pupils' experiences through the whole school Christmas Nativity in the local church. He has been well supported by the Acting Deputy Headteacher in developing the vision. The school leadership team has been very successful in developing an ethos which encourages and promotes high self-esteem, excellent behaviour and strong relationships at all levels. This has been particularly apparent during a time of change. A strong relationship with the local rector, youth leaders and members of the church is valued by the pupils and parents. Pupils have been involved in the local community through the distribution of care packages collected at Harvest time and through their support of Armistice Day and other events. However, the Foundation Governor and school leaders now recognise that raising the profile of the Christian vision is an area for development. To raise that profile they are aware that professional development for governors, as well as staff, in the understanding of the Distinctive Christian Character of the school is a priority, especially with the substantive appointment of the acting Headteacher. This will enable them to evaluate the school as a Church school, including Collective Worship, more effectively in order to support the Headteacher in future developments. By developing a closer relationship with the diocese the school will be able to explore further opportunities for involving themselves in other initiatives to further enhance the experiences of the pupils.

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