



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Giles' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Blanche Lane, South Mimms EN6 3PE



Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection: December 3rd 2009
Previous S48 Inspection: 21st May 2007
URN: 117564
Headteacher: Mrs Susan Ridge
SIAS Inspector Name: Mrs Mel Adams
SIAS Inspector No: 58

School Context

St Giles' is a smaller than average primary school and largely serves the local parish, with some travelling from a wider area because of the school's good reputation. The majority of children are from a white British background. Standards overall are good. The Head teacher has been in post for just over a year, as has the Deputy head, and they are successfully building on previous developments

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Giles' as a Church of England school are good.

St Giles' is a good Church of England school, working well in partnership with the church. The Christian ethos, increasingly supported by expressed Christian values, underpins its day by day work as a school community. As a result relationships are good, enabling children of all ages to develop well academically, spiritually, socially and morally in a safe and happy environment.

Established strengths

- The strong leadership of the Head teacher which is carrying forward church school developments
- The strong partnership between the church and the school.

Focus for development

- To ensure ongoing developments by embedding church school evaluation and monitoring of RE and collective worship as part of the strategic work of the governing body.
- To ensure progress in RE by further developing assessment and tracking and to ensure marking and feedback supports the development of religious understanding.

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

The school's values are having a growing impact on children. They speak of their importance in helping them in their relationships and see them in action in the adults who work with them. This understanding is supported and developed in both collective worship and RE and in some classes, interactive displays enable children to ask and respond to questions which promote thinking. Behaviour is good and children speak of feeling safe in school both of which support a good environment for learning. In addition to developing important skills for working together within the school community, children have a growing awareness of other faiths and cultures both locally and beyond. The environment supports the Christian ethos including a number of crosses and a display of values in the hall. Classroom displays further support both the ethos and spiritual development, including a stable in the Reception class role play area, enabling children to enter into the meaning of the Christmas story summed up by a child who described how the star was central because of the special baby. Parents feel valued and give of their time and talents, and some have contributed to learning through presentations about their own faith and culture, supporting children's understanding of their part in the local and global community. This understanding is further supported by regular fund raising for a number of charities, including a school in Nairobi where students are in correspondence with the children of St Giles.

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

Daily collective worship provides a setting which children see as important in coming together as a school community to learn and to pray. Children participate regularly through writing prayers in which they have opportunity to bring concerns beyond themselves, such as the safety of the armed services in Afghanistan. Recent role play in anti-bullying week helped them to understand how to act on injustice. Children engage well, answering questions and giving explanations, and respond particularly well when given interactive opportunities, discussing challenging questions such as why we send cards at Christmas and confidently and safely taking risks to offer their responses. School values are displayed alongside the table and candle as a focal point. The values are linked to worship through bible stories or Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning materials, and children are affirmed for demonstrating them. A growing awareness of values amongst children is helping them to see their importance in day to day life in school, particularly in the way they behave towards each other. Regular services in church are led by the Priest in charge, and children describe how they enjoy these and see the church as a setting where they are helped to understand the importance of faith. Children have a good understanding of Anglican tradition and practice which inform planning for worship, and includes prayers and greetings and the framework of the church year. The daily act of worship has continued to develop since the previous inspection, and is seen to be influential in the life of the school community by stakeholders. Parents praise the way in which Christian values such as honesty, truthfulness and courage influence children's behaviour. Children's surveys have given feedback on the things they enjoy about worship, but these have not yet covered spiritual development. Staff evaluate collective worship each term. Governors have begun to consider evaluation but have yet to be involved in monitoring worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Standards in RE are good overall. Where learning and teaching is planned to include challenging questions and activities which promote thinking and reflection, children are able to develop religious thinking and apply it to their own experiences. This was evident in the year 1 and 2 class where children were recording who Jesus helped, who they help and how others help them. Learning can be limited where lessons and recorded work only cover learning about religion. Effective marking and feedback also help the development of religious concepts illustrated by the teacher's question about the importance of the cross as a religious symbol giving a child the opportunity to respond. Feedback is not entirely consistent throughout the school which can limit opportunities for assessment for learning in RE. Children are positive about their learning in RE and have enjoyed visiting places of worship including a mosque and St Giles Church. They are able to articulate how these visits help them to develop understanding and respect. Through learning about different faiths and cultures, children have a growing understanding of how values can be shared, illustrated by the year 5 and 6 class considering the Buddhist eight fold path in relation to the ten commandments and St Giles school values. Through such learning they are developing a sense of morality and an awareness of the spiritual. Through the development of such understanding, RE is making a good contribution to the ethos of the school as a church school. Progress has been made since the last inspection on ensuring progress in RE and the new co-ordinator is building on evaluations to develop learning, teaching and assessment to ensure that standards continue to develop. Governors have yet to be involved in regular monitoring of RE.

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

The recent review of the mission statement and values by staff and governors has resulted in the agreed values being taught in both RE and collective worship. A range of stakeholders describe the vision for the school as giving children opportunities to achieve well academically and with a good understanding of the Christian faith and different faiths and cultures, respecting both differences and similarities. This is evident in the way children speak of their interest in both Christianity and other faiths. The strong leadership of the Headteacher, well supported by staff and governors, is ensuring that the vision is moving forward. Parents describe the openness of the management style which enables them to approach the school knowing they will be heard. Feedback from children's surveys has contributed to some developments in collective worship. Governors are committed to church school development but have yet to be involved in regular evaluation and monitoring. There is a commitment to professional development through diocesan training, but this has yet to extend to the personal and spiritual development of staff and governors. The partnership between the church and school is strong and the Priest in charge is a regular visitor to the school, leading the act of worship regularly in church. Parents are appreciative of the partnership and see this as intrinsic to the Christian ethos of the school, which they describe as having extended family values.