

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Roger de Clare Voluntary Controlled Church of England First School

Station Road
Puckeridge
Ware
SG11 1TF

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection:	2 October 2012
Date of last inspection:	April 2007
School's unique reference number:	117406
Headteacher:	Sue Rousell
Inspector's name and number:	Alan Thornsby 137

School context

Roger de Clare is a large first school serving a mixed social-economic intake. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. All pupils make good progress after being slightly below average on entry. The school has a rich outdoor environment and is situated next to the middle school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Roger de Clare as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The high profile Christian values of love and care, that drive the everyday life and relationships of the school, are securely underpinned and reinforced by the impact of worship and religious education on personal and academic development. The commitment to on-going evaluation and development results in a climate of self-appraisal and continuous improvement.

Established strengths

- The caring Christian ethos that promotes positive attitudes and relationships between the whole school community
- The central role of worship in the life of the school and its impact on Christian values and the vision of the school
- The high expectation for the whole school family that informs and drive the climate of continuous improvement

Focus for development

- Inform future development through exploring the ethos with reference to specific Christian values.

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

The school has a vibrant welcoming and caring Christian ethos that is totally evident on entering the building, either as a visitor or member of the school community. Christian love in action drives the whole school. Every child is seen as a special and unique being, nurtured as an individual to fulfil his or her academic and personal potential. Excellent relationships between everyone are based on care, respect and tolerance. Golden rules reflecting a Christian moral code are displayed in throughout the school. Staff have high expectations for the academic and personal development of all groups of children, who are nurtured to rise to any challenge. For example, in a Y3/4 religious education lesson on Islam pupils successfully discussed the questions 'why do Muslims face Mecca?' and 'why are the five promises of Islam represented as pillars?' All pupils are challenged and supported to make good progress because of mixed age/ability classes Teaching is good because of effective subject leadership, supported by lesson observations and tracking systems enable the monitoring of pupils progress. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is excellent. Christian values securely underpin the curriculum and the impact of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development especially through the high profile of religious education and worship is constantly displayed in the behaviour and attitudes of pupils. For example, they recognise and celebrate each other's achievements with applause and words of praise. A child who saw another upset immediately responded 'I will look after him if he would like me to.' Pupils have an input into the life of the school through the school council, eco team and worship club, stating 'We all get on and talk things through.' Posters, symbols and displays, including 'building learning power' and 'all about me' reinforce the distinctive character of the school. The rich variety of outdoor facilities is effectively used to reinforce awe and wonder and the care for God's creation.

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

Worship is central to the daily life of the school, reflecting and promoting Christian values. Themes are based on diocesan resources and 'A Teachers Dozen' and often have learning objectives to support the learning of all pupils. They experience a range of leaders and formats that include weekly class sharing assemblies that recognise achievement in class work. Pupils enter to music and spontaneously begin to sing with a sense of anticipation of a special time. They understand the importance of learning from enjoyable stories that tell a message reinforced through times for personal reflection and prayer. All children feel included because of active storytelling and opportunities for role-play. They enjoy 'communicating with God' through singing and prayers 'to say thank you and sorry.' Pupils have a voice in worship through the input of the worship club. They contribute to the planning and delivery of worship, the siting of prayer boxes and are responsible for initial on-going monitoring of worship to improve quality. This and visits by foundation governors inform evaluation and the subsequent reports to the governing body. Members of the worship club are role models for the whole school in showing positive attitudes and behaviour in worship. The vicar is a regular visitor leading worship in school, as well as having a role in teaching about the church, artefacts and Christianity. The Church is used for festival services throughout the year, including the leavers service. This finishes with pupils carrying a lighted candle out of church to represent the taking of their talents and values into the world.

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

The headteacher has a passionate vision of providing the best learning opportunities within a Christian context. This vision and ethos is fully understood and shared by everyone in school. School documentation reflects the central role of a distinctive Church character within the life of the school. Governors are active in their role and fully involved in challenging and supporting the life of the school through meetings and regular cycle of visits that have a specific focus. Adults have high expectations of each others roles and responsibilities. This ensures that they fully understand the strengths of the school and enables the creation of a climate of on-going assessment, evaluation and development planning. There is constant development because standing still is not an option. The issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and the school has now realized the need to evaluate the specific Christian values that are fully embedded within the distinctive ethos of the school. Christian values inform the relationships throughout the school and with the wider community. There is effective communication with parents through an open door policy and through the effective use of questionnaires. Parents fully understand the Christian distinctiveness of the school and recognise the impact of the values on their children, stating 'our school is a village school with benefits'. Another parent commented 'I send my children here because of the love and care of the school.' The Parent and Teacher Association support the school by organising a range of fund raising activities for adults and children. The school has good links with the diocese, other local schools and the community.

Contributions for local community magazine celebrate the school as a church school. The links with the church are enhanced by the attendance of the headteacher at church committee meetings.