

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Stapleford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane
Stapleford
Herts SG14 3NB

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Date of inspection:	01 May 2012
Date of last inspection:	08 November 2006
School's unique reference number:	117455
Headteacher:	Rebecca Collins
Inspector's name and number:	Bob Hopcraft (484)

School context

Stapleford is a much smaller than average sized primary school, which serves the villages of Stapleford, Waterford and Bramfield and beyond. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is above the national average, while the proportion eligible for free school meals is below. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Stapleford CofE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Stapleford is an outstanding church school. Pupils and staff speak very positively of the impact that its values have on their everyday lives. High quality acts of worship and provision for religious education provide a firm basis for spiritual development.

Established strengths

- The vision of the headteacher and her staff in promoting the school's Christian character and values;
- High quality acts of worship, which nurture pupils' spiritual development very effectively;
- High quality RE lessons that encourage pupils to reflect deeply on what they have learned and the implications this has for their everyday lives.

Focus for development

- Promote opportunities for governors and other stakeholder groups to be more closely engaged with the strategic development of those aspects of church school distinctiveness identified through the school's self-evaluation.

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

This is because Christian values lie at the heart of the day-to-day life of the school, providing all who work and play there with a strong spiritual and moral basis for their lives. These values are implicit in the excellent relationships between pupils and staff, who live and grow in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. As a result, all pupils feel cared for and special, recognising the uniqueness of each individual and what they have to offer to the community. Pupils speak positively of the values they learn at school, particularly through collective worship and recognise how these enable them to lead better lives: as one pupil said: *"We are a church school because collective worship shows us the Christian values and the teachings of Jesus"*. As a result, the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly well, enabling pupils to demonstrate an understanding of Christianity and other faiths well beyond that expected for their age. The many opportunities for pupils to show leadership and independence, for example through *Playground Buddies* and *Helping Hands*, enable them to grow as future citizens, with a strong emphasis on helping those within the local and global community, including a range of charitable giving. The school benefits from well-maintained buildings and grounds, which have been developed significantly since the time of the previous inspection. Displays are bright and vibrant and support pupils' learning very effectively.

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

The outstanding act of worship observed during the visit provided many opportunities for pupils to take an active role. It was rooted in their own experience, while drawing out biblical and Christian meaning, enabling pupils to grow in spiritual understanding. Pupils say that this was typical of the experience they receive on a daily basis and appreciate the positive impact it has on their lives. This is also appreciated by parents, who recognise that, as one parent put it, *"... it upholds the values and teachings of Christ in a practical way"*. The quality of worship is further supported by the strong links with the local church: clergy play a very active role in the life of the school and provide pastoral and practical support in equal measure. Worship is very well planned and systems to evaluate its quality and impact, developed in response to the previous SIAS report, enable school leaders to refine and improve pupils' experiences on an on-going basis. The many opportunities for prayer and quiet reflection enable pupils to examine meaning on a deeper level, while their excellent singing is an expression of their joy and commitment.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.

This is because pupils attain standards that are well above average, enabling them to speak with confidence about Christianity and other major world faiths. Well planned lessons, delivered through consistently good teaching, enable pupils to make rapid progress. Challenging questions asked by teachers and support staff enable pupils to reflect and grow in their understanding of often complex issues. An example of this was observed during the inspection, where pupils were encouraged to develop their understanding of the Holy Trinity through a study of different versions of the story of Pentecost. This enabled pupils to search for meaning, causing one pupil to reflect that *"...the Holy Spirit is the part of God that is with us all the time"*. While older pupils were examining these concepts, younger pupils were being led to an understanding of *things that are important to us* through stories and opportunities to talk quietly with partners, while listening to calm, soothing music: this created a wonderfully spiritual atmosphere, allowing pupils time and opportunity to come to a deeper understanding of their own 'special place'. These examples illustrate the positive way in which RE is tailored appropriately to the needs of pupils at different stages of their understanding and the high levels of challenge provided. RE is effectively led by a well-informed and enthusiastic subject leader, who has worked hard to develop the school's effective assessment procedures since the last inspection.

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

The headteacher and her staff articulate the school's Christian vision outstandingly well. As a result, Christian values are intrinsic in all that the school does and are reflected in all its key documentation. The highly effective pastoral links between the parish and the school support and nurture its Christian foundation still further. A thoughtful and accurate evaluation of the school as a Church school has been completed, involving a range of stakeholder groups; while this has identified clear areas for development, these have not yet been translated into action plans which support the future development of the school, specifically as a *church school*. Stapleford is strongly inclusive and there is an outstanding commitment to meeting the needs of both pupils and staff. The school works very closely with a number of other church schools, enabling developments and good practice to be shared on a practical level. The large majority of parents are very supportive of the school and speak of the genuine co-operation between school and church, which both lie at the centre of the community. Comments such as *"It gives children the chance to explore faith issues"* and *"The school leadership demonstrates a clear Christian ethos and bases their approach on this, along with support from the local clergy"* are typical of these highly positive responses. A small minority of parents returned questionnaires that were negative in their comments. The inspector could find no evidence to support these views at any point during the inspection: school leaders are highly committed to the school as an inclusive Christian foundation and links with the local church and community are outstanding.

SIAS report May 2012 Stapleford CofE VA Primary School, Herts SG14 3NB