



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Stevenage: St Nicholas Church of England Primary School and Nursery  
Six Hills Way, Stevenage SG2 0PZ**

**Diocese of St Albans**

<b>LA:</b>	<b>Hertfordshire</b>
<b>SIAS Inspection:</b>	<b>Wednesday 18 March 2009</b>
<b>Previous S48 Inspection:</b>	<b>15 March 2006</b>
<b>URN:</b>	<b>117456</b>
<b>Headteacher:</b>	<b>Mrs Jackie Roberts (Acting Headteacher)</b>
<b>SIAS Inspector Name:</b>	<b>Bob Hopcraft</b>
<b>SIAS Inspector No:</b>	<b>484</b>

### **School Context**

St Nicholas is situated in attractive grounds on the outskirts of the town, serving the seven parishes of Stevenage. This results in most children having to be brought to school by parents. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage, although there are an increasing number of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is significant and increasing mobility of pupils, especially at the end of Year 4. The school provides a wide range of extended services, including breakfast club and extra curricular activities.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas as a Church of England school are good.**

This is because the Christian values, which lie at the heart of the school, have a strong impact on all who work and play here, encouraging them to develop into thoughtful and caring members of society. The acting headteacher has continued to promote the school's Christian ethos very effectively and the school offers many opportunities for spiritual growth and development.

### **Established strengths**

- The clear vision for the development of the school as a Church school and the quality of the school's self-evaluation
- The clear Christian values which underpin the school's work and opportunities for spiritual reflection and growth
- The outstanding relationships at all levels
- The outstanding links with the local clergy

### **Focus for development**

- Develop systematic ways to evaluate acts of worship and their impact on pupils
- Build on the current good practice in assessment to ensure that staff and pupils are aware of next steps in learning in religious education
- Use the school's effective self evaluation to develop a strategic plan for the future development of the school as a Church school, and incorporate this within the school's development plan

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

This is because all pupils feel valued and special, with Christian values having a key impact on their personal development and progress. As a result, pupils display high levels of self-esteem, maturity and independence and they support each other well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and opportunities for spiritual reflection and development have improved significantly since the previous Section 48 inspection. The development of reflective prayer areas in each classroom has supported this well. For example, in Year 1 pupils are able to reflect on the simply, but effectively told Easter story and write their own thoughts on displayed speech bubbles. This enables them to engage with the story and reflect on its place in their own lives. The school's values programme provides pupils with a strong moral basis for their future lives, an aspect supported by comments from many parents. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop an understanding of other cultures and religions. There is a strong family feel within the school. As a result, pupils support each other very well and relationships are outstanding at all levels. Pupils express a great pride in their school and the well-cared for environment, both inside and out, provides excellent support for their development. Evidence of the school's Christian character oozes from every pore and no-one can be in any doubt that this is a Church of England school.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school and reflects its Christian character well. Worship offers many opportunities for spiritual growth for all who take part and an intensely spiritual atmosphere is created through good use of music, prayer and reflection. Acts of worship are well planned and recorded and are often effectively evaluated, with the outcomes used to improve future experience. However, this is not yet carried out in a systematic way and the impact on pupils is not evaluated at present. Pupils have many opportunities to plan and participate actively in worship and as a result they respond well. A good example of this was seen during the inspection, where year 4 pupils led an act of Worship on the theme of *"Why do some people regard Jesus as inspirational?"* The opportunity to reflect and comment on many images of Christ during the service, illustrated a well-thought out opportunity to respond to and respect other cultural heritages. Pupils are knowledgeable about a range of key Christian festivals, supported by the planned cycle of special services and Eucharists. Pupils have opportunities to engage actively in the Eucharist, which support the school's Anglican tradition effectively. The excellent links with the local clergy support collective worship well.

**The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**

This is because RE has a high priority in the school and is well resourced. It is effectively led by the RE co-ordinator, who has a very clear view for its future development. The newly structured syllabus for RE supports teaching and learning well. As a result, standards and progress are good across the school and many pupils attain above average levels for their age. Teaching in RE has improved since the last Section 48 inspection and is now consistently good across the school. The range of training on offer to staff to support RE teaching has improved and has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Good use is made of drama and role play to support learning and there are wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect on complex questions. For example, pupils in Year 6 were asked to reflect on the question "*Is the Easter story the greatest story ever told?*" This produced many thoughtful responses in discussion, inspiring one pupil to write "*Betrayal, a heartbreaking experience, is a terrible feeling...*" Assessment in RE is developing, but the school recognises that this is an area for ongoing development. Pupils are able to discuss their beliefs appropriately and all pupils are encouraged to relate RE topics to their every day lives and experience. There are good opportunities to study and understand the traditions and beliefs of other faith groups and pupils have enjoyed opportunities to engage in discussion with a visiting rabbi and to visit St Albans Cathedral and the Hitchin Gurdwara.

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

This is because the school's Christian vision is shared by all and is celebrated within the school at every turn. The acting headteacher has built on the work of her predecessors and is continuing to promote the school's Christian ethos very effectively. She, her senior leaders and governors have completed an outstandingly accurate self-evaluation of the school as a Church school and leaders monitor this aspect of the school's development well. However, this has not yet been translated into a strategic plan for its future development. Very effective links exist between the school, the local parishes and its ecumenical neighbours. As a result the school's pastoral needs are very well met. Staff, governors and parents share a common vision for the school and every opportunity is taken to review and develop this aspect, for example during "*Ethos Days*". Parents are very supportive of the school, moving one parent to write of "*...the excellent Christian ethos and the fact that my children are happy/confident to share this at home and to lead in worship*". As another parent put it "*...there is a strong sense of community within the school*" and pupils have many opportunities to engage actively in developing links with those in other parts of the world. The current *Lent Appeal* is only one example of the many opportunities for pupils to engage actively in charitable giving.