



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St. Ippolyts Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Ashbrook Lane,
St. Ippolyts,
Herts. SG4 7PB

Diocese of St. Albans

Hertfordshire LEA

SIAS Inspection : 14th and 16th March 2006

Previous S23 Inspection: 4th & 6th July, 2000

URN: 117440

Headteacher: Mrs. M. Nelson

SIAS Inspector: Catherine Large

Context

St. Ippolyts is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School catering for 145 pupils aged between 4 and 11. It is located in a small village on the outskirts of Hitchin. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds and are mostly of white British background. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is below average. A small number of pupils have English as an additional language but none of these is at an early stage of learning English. Recently completed building work has improved the facilities immensely.

Summary Judgement

St. Ippolyts is an outstanding Church of England school. Its ethos is firmly rooted in Christian values and pupils feel cared for and respected. A distinctive Christian dimension is evident in all aspects of school life and creates a very effective environment for learning. Staff and governors are strongly committed to its Christian foundation.

Established strengths

- The outstanding Christian ethos of the school which leads to a caring and happy learning environment for pupils of all abilities
- The positive attitudes and responses of pupils to worship
- The good contribution of religious education to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- The strong commitment of staff and governors to the promotion of the Christian ethos of the school.

Focus for development

- Develop a process for the assessment of religious education
- Widen range of resources and participation of pupils in collective worship
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to feature in the life of the church

The school, through its distinctive character, meets the needs of all learners outstandingly well [Overall grade 1]

The Christian ethos of the school is evident in the high quality of relationships evident at all levels and across the full spectrum of school life. There is a strong sense of trust and community in the school. Pupils are adamant that the teachers care about them as individuals. Pupils of all faiths and backgrounds are valued. Detailed school reports confirm that teachers have a very good knowledge of individual pupils' achievements and learning needs. Christian values underpin policy and practice and give rise to excellent attitudes to learning and behaviour around the school. Through its reward systems the school promotes values of kindness and effort as well as achievement. The spiritual development of pupils is strong and promoted well in many aspects of school life including the classroom prayer boards, the range of opportunities for personal reflection in worship and religious education and the superb displays which are inspirational. The recently completed building work has transformed the school facilities. This improved learning environment, especially the new hall, is having a very positive impact on the spiritual life of the school as it creates an excellent environment for worship and display.

**The effectiveness of the worshipping experience provided by the school is good
[Overall grade 2]**

Worship is central to school life and pupils respond very positively to the range of opportunities provided. These include the daily act of collective worship and the prayers at other times in the school day. Worship takes place in a peaceful and respectful atmosphere. Pupils' singing in the range of songs used for worship is excellent. The choir and individual musicians make a significant contribution to creating a sense that worship is special. Appropriate symbols and focal points help pupils focus on themes for worship. Pupils take worship seriously and some describe ways in which prayer had helped them at particular times in their lives. There are good links with the church and the vicar is a regular contributor to worship in the school. The school shares in worship in the church at special times such as key Christian festivals and when pupils move to secondary school. The school's 'Stations of the Cross' experience, which uses the building, the grounds, the village war memorial and the church, is an excellent example of active worship that adults and pupils find inspirational. Through both school based and church worship, pupils become familiar with Anglican tradition and practice such as the saying of the Grace. They feel pleased that they can write their own prayers for their classroom boards and would like these prayers used more in worship. Pupil surveys identify that they value the opportunity for quiet and personal reflection in worship and would appreciate more opportunities for this experience. They would also like pupils to take a more active role in worship. A wider range of resources and styles of worship would further improve the overall experience for pupils. At the time of reporting, the present incumbent is leaving the parish. In the future, the school will be able to fulfil its intention to explore the possibility of introducing an appropriate form of Eucharist.

**The effectiveness of Religious Education is good
[Overall grade 2]**

The quality of provision for religious education is good and reflects the improvements that have taken place recently. The staff, governing body and Diocese have supported the changes to the curriculum and the results are showing in the quality of pupils' work. Pupils show particular strengths in their understanding of important religious ideas and in their ability to ask questions and to relate the teaching to their own lives. Recent lessons on temptation and on the qualities of people like Mother Teresa reflect a growing maturity in pupils' thinking. The subject co-ordinator, with significant help from the Diocese, is developing a very good scheme of work that helps pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world faiths as well as helping them apply their learning to everyday life. The subject is making a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teaching is at least good and often outstanding and excellent foundations are laid in the early years in school. Particular good use is made of information communication technology (ICT). The youngest pupils in school can recognise what it means to belong and to show respect for the special things of others. Pupils enjoy religious education because it gives them opportunities to express their beliefs and feelings in a variety of ways. Standards in knowledge and understanding of Christianity are above average. Standards are average in relation to other world faiths but are improving. The school needs to increase the range of religious artefacts and to provide more opportunities for pupils to encounter members of faith communities. Assessment of pupils' progress in the subject is currently underdeveloped.

**The leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding
[Overall grade 1]**

The factor that most determines the success of this school as a church school is that the headteacher, governors and staff are all committed to promoting its Christian distinctiveness. There is as strong sense of unity pervading the school. School aims and literature, internal and external signs and symbols and the school prospectus all identify its Christian character. Parents strongly endorse the quality of care and the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils value their school and the opportunities they have to contribute their own ideas, particularly through the School Council. The changing programme of study in religious education has received the full backing of all concerned and developments feature in the school programme of developments. The school's own church school self evaluation is accurate and most issues for development feature in it. Links with the local community are good and relationships with other schools are excellent, particularly in connection with primary-secondary transfer, music and sport. The school features on the church website and links with the church are good. Its close proximity to the school enables ease of access. There is room for more explicit links with the church through, for example, the featuring of pupils' work and activities in the church and its newsletter, and more frequent visits to the church so that pupils can experience the building in different ways in addition to religious education lessons and formal worship.