



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

**Sutton Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School
High Street, Sutton, Beds SG19 2NE**

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection: 11 December 2006
Previous S23 Inspection: 4, 7 and 8 June 2001
URN: 109626
Headteacher: Susan Gainley
SIAS Inspector Name: Bob Hopcraft
SIAS Inspector No:

School Context

Sutton CofE (VA) Lower school is a small village school with three classes, two of which have mixed year groups. Pupils come from varied backgrounds from within the village of Sutton and the surrounding area. Attainment on entry varies from average to below. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Sutton CofE (VA) Lower School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

Sutton CofE (VA) Lower School is an outstanding Church school that provides a caring and supportive environment for all who learn and work there. Its ethos is firmly rooted in Christian values. Relationships between learners and adults are outstanding, providing an excellent environment in which to learn and develop.

Established strengths

- The clear vision of the headteacher, staff and governors for the school as a Christian community;
- Outstanding relationships within the school at all levels and the positive modelling of Christian values by all adults;
- The very effective relationship with All Saints Church and local clergy;
- The active prayer life of the school and the opportunities provide for quiet reflection and spiritual development

Focus for development

- To develop a formal system for monitoring and evaluating collective worship to ensure continuing high quality worship for all who participate;
- To develop planning in RE further, so that tasks encourage pupils to think about how stories relate to their daily lives;
- To continue to develop assessment in religious education in order that all pupils can achieve their best.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners (grade 1)

This is because all learners feel valued and special and the school provides very good support for pupils of all abilities. Parents confirm that it is an exceptionally caring and welcoming school. One parent remarks in the questionnaire that “...it is a wonderfully caring environment, which demonstrates the love of God in action towards the children”. Positive attitudes and excellent relationships at all levels make a significant contribution to pupils’ learning and personal development. Pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is outstanding and they are provided with many opportunities to understand and appreciate the differences between countries, cultures and faiths. Behaviour is excellent and pupils are positively involved in agreeing rules for good behaviour. The school environment, including displays, reflects the school’s Christian ethos well and symbols which celebrate its Christian foundation are evident in many parts of the building. Pupils’ work is also displayed in All Saints Church.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding (grade 1)

Collective worship plays a key part in the life of the school. It is well planned and it covers the Christian year, key dates in other religions and a range of moral themes. As a result, pupils enjoy worship and the active part they play in it. They enjoy looking for the hidden meanings in stories and talk animatedly about their visits to the church and other places of worship. Pupils say that it is an important time of the school day for them. They sing very enthusiastically and are fully involved in the school’s developing prayer life, which provides opportunities for prayer and quiet reflection during the day, as well as during worship. The school does not currently monitor the quality of collective worship in any formal way. Local clergy are fully committed to supporting the school with collective worship and do so very effectively. The incumbent visits regularly and a local Baptist minister also comes in to lead worship. Pupils visit All Saints Church on set occasions during the year and families are actively encouraged to attend Church on special Sundays, for example Mothering Sunday.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good (grade 2)

Standards in religious education are good. This is because lessons are well planned and pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding and appreciation of the Christianity and other major world religions. Pupils show a keen interest in the subject and enjoy their work. However, much of the work in religious education relates to learning about religions, rather than encouraging pupils to develop their religious thinking, which limits their ability to relate what they learn to their own daily lives. Pupils in the foundation stage are exposed to a range of activities with a spiritual dimension and the use of role play to develop an early understanding of religious aspects is particularly effective. As they get older, pupils develop a good knowledge of bible stories and they are able to talk about the major festivals of the Christian year and the lives of saints. Pupils are particularly knowledgeable about other world religions. Pupils in years 3 and 4 have a good knowledge of Islam and can make comparisons between a Mosque and a Christian Church, following their recent visit to the Central Mosque in Luton. The school has a system for assessing progress in RE, but this is in its early stages and is just beginning to impact on the development of the subject.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding (grade 1)

The headteacher and all staff model the Christian ethos very effectively and Christian values are implicit in all that the school does. Governors are clear about their role and support and challenge the school to realise its Christian vision. The school has completed an accurate evaluation of its own effectiveness as a church school and uses this to challenge the school community to develop still further. Parents are all aware that it is a Church school and respect the values that it encourages their children to develop. They are kept well informed and they appreciate the school’s open door policy. The partnership between the school and the local clergy is outstanding. It is a two-way process and pupils are encouraged to attend All Saints Church on special Sundays, for example the Christingle service and visiting clergy come to the school every week to lead worship and to support in the foundation stage. The school has very strong connections with the local community and takes an active part in local events, including the village fete and the annual Flower Festival.