



**St Catherine's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Park Road, Ware SG12 0AW**

LEA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	2 nd November 2006
Previous S23 Inspection:	2001
URN:	117410
Headteacher:	Mr Graham Lancaster (temporary Acting Head)
SIAS Inspector:	Revd Vanessa G. Cato

School context

St Catherine's is an average-sized primary school of 157 pupils aged 3-11, including a part-time Nursery. All but a very few pupils are of white British heritage and are mainly drawn from the local urban housing estates. The extensive but empty building complex reflects a major decline in the local demography. There is a temporary Acting Head who replaces a longstanding Headteacher who took early retirement ten days before the inspection.

Summary Judgement

St Catherine's is a satisfactory school. It has a caring and supportive atmosphere which fosters good social and moral development. However, in spite of good links with the local Parish Church, it lacks distinctiveness as a Christian Foundation and there is little to promote the children's spiritual development. Management is weak. There is a lack of training, and further development issues from two previous reports have not been addressed.

Established strengths

- There is a caring, supportive atmosphere in the school, where Christian values are evident in relationships and good moral and social development.
- There are good links with the Parish Church through the Vicar and Foundation governors.
- There are also good links with the local community.
- Commitment to the children is reflected in the concern to provide modern equipment in classrooms and play areas.

Focus for development

- Reflect regularly on the implications of being a Church School. Ensure clear evidence of the School's Christian ethos in all school documents, including the Mission Statement and School Improvement Plan, and in all aspects of school life.
- Provide staff training, with the support of the diocese, on children's spiritual and cultural development in worship and across the curriculum.
- Improve the worship environment to increase spiritual awareness and the sense of awe and wonder
- Increase resources for Collective Worship and the school library.

The school makes satisfactory provision for all its learners. Grade: 3

Christian values are evident in most relationships. The majority feel valued as individuals, whatever their background, and the children interviewed felt any problems are dealt with early and satisfactorily. The School Council is an effective voice in the school. Governors are keen to support the school, which is in good repair and provided with a range of modern equipment to assist learning and play. However, while social and moral development is good, spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory and not well understood by staff. There has been no RE or Collective Worship training for some years. Staff and governors have little understanding of the distinctive nature of a good Church school. This is reflected in the lack of Christian symbols and displays in the school. There is one wooden cross on a notice board by the office. In spite of the space within the school there is no reflective/quiet corner. The School Improvement Plan, Mission Statement and RE Policy lack specific mention of the Christian ethos of the school and the importance of Christian principles in the life of the school. Resources for RE, Collective Worship are poor and there is a limited number of religious story and reference books in the school library. Links with the diocese are minimal.

Worship takes a satisfactory place in the life of the school. Grade 3

Collective Worship is placed just before the morning break to emphasize its importance. All teaching staff are in attendance. Pupils regularly take part in the "Class Assembly" on Fridays, to which parents are invited. Parents are positive about the experience. The children sing well and there is a broad variety of hymns. At the weekly hymn practice assembly more complicated words and images are explored. The school choir often sings at events in the community. The pupils generally enjoy Collective Worship, however they remember very little, except for some memorable visual occasions. The worship environment is poor, lacking visual stimulus and a focal point other than the OHP. In the act of worship observed there was a good rapport with the children, but there was a missed opportunity to reinforce the points with visual aids, and no opportunity for silence and reflection. The very basic Collective Worship records show the school celebrates the main Christian festivals, and takes account of those of other faiths. However, it also suggests a heavy diet of saints and Maximus Mouse. There are no links with other areas of the curriculum and Collective Worship does not feature in the SIP. While some staff meet regularly for prayer, pupils are not encouraged to say prayers at other points in the school day. The Lord's Prayer is rarely used. The Vicar regularly leads worship and provides the Anglican tradition. There are good links with the Parish Church and the Vicar is enthusiastic about his involvement in the school. The children occasionally worship in the Parish Church.

Leadership and management of St Catherine's are unsatisfactory. Grade: 4

While pupils, staff and parents are aware St Catherine's is a Church School, there is little evidence that sufficient attention has been paid to the distinctive Christian ethos of the school or to the promotion of the pupil's spiritual development. The school's senior management and governors have not understood clearly what constitutes a Christian ethos and are therefore unaware of what needs to be done to improve the situation. This is evidenced by lack of reference to the school's Christian ethos and values in most documents and as an area for development in the SIP. RE has not been given its proper place as a Core subject and there has been no staff training for RE or Collective Worship for many years. Almost no advantage has been taken of diocesan trainings, resources or links. Most of the issues for development from both the 2001 and 1996 Section 23 reports have not been addressed. The Foundation governors are supportive and active, but need to develop a "critical friend" approach to the development of the Christian character of the school and the processes to make this effective.