



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Diocese of St Albans



St Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Junior School

LEA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	23 November 2006
Previous S23 Inspection:	14, 15 and 19 March 2001
URN:	117409
Headteacher:	Andrew Cosslett
SIAS Inspector:	Bob Hopcraft

School context

St Mary's is an average sized junior school, catering for pupils from age 7-11. A large majority of pupils are of white British origin and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Attainment on entry is high and pupil mobility is low in comparison to other schools nationally. The school has recently suffered a fire and is operating normally during rebuilding work.

Summary Judgement

St Mary's is a satisfactory and improving Church school that is working hard to develop its distinctive Christian character. Each individual is valued and pupils enjoy school in a bright and supportive environment. Relationships are good and pupils are encouraged to care for others within a Christian community.

Established strengths

- A clear Christian ethos, which is impacting increasingly on the learning environment;
- Good relationships between pupils and staff;
- Well-planned acts of worship, which are enjoyed by pupils;
- Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and care for others;
- A bright and stimulating learning environment which reflects the school's Christian character.

Focus for development

- Develop systems for monitoring and recording the school's effectiveness as a Church school and its Christian character;
- Provide further opportunities for pupils to experience other cultures, both within and beyond the curriculum;
- Further develop collective worship so that it more fully involves parents, community and the church.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners (Grade: 2)

This is because each pupil is valued and everyone is regarded as being of worth. Typical of the responses in parent questionnaires is the comment: *It is a school that cares about all its pupils. Pupils are encouraged to value each other.* Pupils enjoy school and feel that they are part of a caring and supportive organisation. Teachers support the pupils well. The impact of Christian values on learners is improving and the headteacher and staff have worked hard to develop this aspect of the school. The school creed is central to its life and opportunities are now built into the school day for reflection and thought. Pupils' social and moral development are good and the school council is effective in helping pupils to develop a sense of community and involvement. Initiatives such as *playground monitors* encourage pupils to become independent and to develop a sense of responsibility. More opportunities are now available for spiritual development, but these need time to embed in practice. While cultural development is satisfactory and is planned within the curriculum, more could be done to expose pupils to other cultures, both within and outside the curriculum. Relationships are good at all levels and pupils behave sensitively and thoughtfully towards others. The school environment reflects its Christian character and Christian symbols are clearly displayed.

The worshipping experience provided by the school is satisfactory (Grade 3)

Acts of worship are carefully planned and play an increasingly important role in the life of the school. All staff play a part in worship and take turns to lead. Pupils are actively involved in worship and, as a result, report that they enjoy the experience. Pupils are also involved in co-ordinating some aspects of worship, including the IT and sound systems. However, the school does not at present monitor the effectiveness of worship and collective worship does not feature within the school improvement plan. Themes are rooted strongly in the Christian tradition and the Bible, while moral and spiritual issues are also addressed. Time for reflection is built into the worshipping experience and a candle is provided as a focus for thought, encouraging pupils of all faiths to derive inspiration from worship. The school creed is used as a model for prayer and pupils know and understand the meanings behind the creed. Parents feel that they would like more opportunities to be involved in worship and the school should consider how it might support this need. Clergy are involved in worship at the school, but would like the opportunity to be involved still further, particularly at the planning stage.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory (Grade 3)

All parents are aware that St Mary's is a Church school and the headteacher, senior leadership, staff and governors are working hard to promote the school's distinctive Christian character. All staff, governors and pupils have been involved in developing the school's new vision statement and aims and parents are currently being consulted about these. However, governors, staff and other stakeholders are not yet involved with the evaluation of the school as a church school and should be more regularly involved in monitoring and reviewing progress towards its aims. The school has good links with the community, notably through charity fundraising, and pupils take part each year in a range of local events, for example the writing competition organised by the local Rotary Club. Links with the Church are developing and the school community attends services at the local church twice each year. Pupils speak animatedly about the annual Christingle service and their involvement in the Easter drama presentation. Clergy play an active role in the school and are well known to the pupils. Some parents feel that there could be a closer partnership between the school and the Church.