



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report



Weston Primary School
Church of England Voluntary Controlled
Maiden Street, Weston, Hitchin SG4 7AG

Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Hertfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	6th and 7th December 2007
Previous S23 Inspection:	Unknown
URN:	117413
Headteacher:	Mrs Zoe Phillips
SIAS Inspector Name:	Mrs Judith Ruff
SIAS Inspector No:	528

School Context

The school has 143 pupils on roll, but it is oversubscribed. This is currently putting pressure on the accommodation, as pupils in Years 5 and 6 are now split and taught in two groups, with one group in the hall. This is far from ideal as important activities, such as Collective Worship, have to be set up at the last minute. Pupils are able to join the school from nursery age and almost all then continue into the main school. Mobility rates are low. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background and the number with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Weston VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Weston VC Primary School is a good Church school, with many strengths of which it can be justly proud. The newly appointed Headteacher and governors are developing an effective partnership and vision in order to promote the school's Christian vision. The school has outstanding links with the Church and the local community and has excellent systems for ensuring that that all staff and pupils feel cared for and valued.

Established strengths

- The outstanding relationship between the school, the parish and the local community
- The very good relationships between staff and pupils at all levels
- The school council, which provides an effective voice for pupils within the school
- The school's systems for ensuring that all pupils are made to feel welcome and secure at whatever time of year they enter the school;
- The commitment of the Governing Body towards fostering a strong Church school ethos

Focus for development

- Build up the Church school foundation more visibly through signage and documentation
- Provide more opportunities for the whole school community to develop spirituality, through planned periods of reflection and stillness and enabling pupils to understand more fully the importance of worship to Christians
- Use Diocesan training and resource collections to supplement and enhance materials for Collective Worship within the school

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

This is because all pupils feel valued and special and this reflects the strong Christian values which underpin the school's ethos. Pupils are treated and treat one another with respect and they understand the needs of others well. Parents speak highly of the school. They are very appreciative of the strong nurturing aspect which runs through the year groups, enabling their children to celebrate their achievements, which guides and supports them in times of difficulty and enables them to become confident, yet thoughtful, young people. Pupils enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about their teachers and other adult helpers, who show them such high levels of care and commitment. Staff know pupils well and the personal development of each child is central to the school's ethos. For example, initiatives such as the 'Friendship Groups', befriending schemes through the 'Friendship Bench', all build a high level of care and support for members of the school community. Good relationships are evident at all levels, supported by the school's behaviour policy, which is understood by all. Pupils experiencing specific behavioural difficulties receive one to one support to assist them in mediating through peer relationship difficulties. The atmosphere within the school is one of collaboration and mutual respect. Staff members speak of feeling very much part of a team and pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the school's development through the very effective school council. Members interviewed spoke of wanting to make their school even better and took very seriously pupil suggestions placed in a box, ranging from the removal of moss from the playground surface, to adopting a pet for each class. Displays and resources are used positively to promote the Christian ethos of caring for each other. The 'Thoughts and Feelings' Board in the entrance hall has begun to encourage the children to think of others, to write prayers and to express their feelings. The very attractive stained glass window collage, made by the older children, is very striking to visitors on entering the school. This was the outcome of reflection after some Diocesan training had been attended by two governors and the Headteacher. The main sign outside of the school does make clear the Christian foundation, but most of the other signage and documentation refers to the school as 'Weston Primary School', including the school aims, which do not make reference to the importance of being a Church school.

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

Collective Worship is an important part of the life of the school and underpins its Christian character. Acts of worship are varied in format, taking place both in classrooms and the school hall. The school has considered how pupils can be actively involved in them and this area is developing through pupil prayers, readings and musical contributions. For example a pupil played a Christmas carol on her flute, having only been playing the instrument for six weeks. Pupils are not always sufficiently clear that worship is a time for quiet reflection and the way in which they are prepared for the worship experience can be improved. There are good opportunities for pupils to use the local church for worship at major festivals. The monthly 'Children's Church' is very successful in attracting about forty pupils with their parents. In these services, pupils are able to participate by being part of an orchestra, reading and in leading the prayers. Within the school, pupil prayers can be further celebrated and used to build up a rich heritage for future use and reflection. Pupils know the Lords Prayer. The actions which accompany the words are beginning to deflect the children's thoughts from the actual words, something the school should consider. Pupils enjoy singing, but at times this develops into over enthusiasm, resulting in shouting. Acts of worship are clearly planned by the Worship Co-ordinator, using resources within the school, including the use of the SEAL materials, which provides a strong basis for a developing understanding of a range of values. Resources for Collective Worship are limited and there is a need to use Diocesan training and resources to develop a greater range of provision. Pupils enjoy the weekly visits by the vicar and parents speak of the benefits that this brings in terms of their children feeling confident to ask questions and feeling comfortable within the church building. The school has plans for a questionnaire for pupils to assist in gaining their evaluations of

worship. However, first pupils need to be made more fully aware of the difference between worship and assembling for school notices and celebrations. Opportunities such as 'Celebration Assemblies' are very positive in terms of giving the pupils recognition for achievements, both academic and in more varied areas, such as attendance and lunchtime activities. The element of worship could be strengthened by adding a hymn or song which can accompany the prayer.

Overall, pupils need to be provided with more opportunities to develop spiritual awareness, through planned periods of stillness and reflection. Collective Worship would be enhanced by better levels of preparation before pupils enter to create a calm, worshipful environment, when pupils understand that this is a special time in the life of the school

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

The newly appointed Headteacher and governors are working hard to promote the school's Christian vision and do this successfully. They have already attended Diocesan training on developing the distinctive Christian character of the school and this has had an impact on their thinking and resulted in the excellent stained glass collage in the entrance hall. There is further scope for making the Christian foundation of the school more explicit through signage and documentation. Foundation and other governors actively support the school's distinctive Christian character. For example, many are involved in Church life and were very active in the headteacher appointment process. There are very strong pastoral and teaching links between the parish and the school and the vicar plays an active role on the governing body and in the life of the school. The school has completed a good Church school self evaluation form, which together with this report, needs to be used in a systematic way to consider future strategic development of the school's Christian character. All staff are clear that Weston is a Church school and support its ethos. The newly appointed Deputy Headteacher, who commences in post in January, is very positive about her new role, having previously worked in Church schools. Parents, too, speak positively of the school and understand its Christian status and character and their views are sought through surveys and conversations on a range of issues. For example the Headteacher holds regular coffee mornings for them to meet with her and discuss issues.