

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Bartholomew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Common Field
Wigginton
Tring HP23 6EP

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority:	Hertfordshire
Dates of inspection:	4 th March 2013
Date of last inspection:	June 2008
School's unique reference number:	117463
Headteacher:	Julie Kemp
Inspector's name and number:	Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

School context

St. Bartholomew's is a smaller than average school of four classes. Almost all pupils are white British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has a number of nationally accredited awards.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Bartholomew's as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The passion and drive of the headteacher, staff and governors ensure that St Bartholomew's provides loving and caring learning situation, underpinned by faith and Christian values. This enables all pupils to achieve academic and personal potential.

Established strengths

- The passion of the head teacher and governors that empowers staff to create a learning environment that nurtures the academic and spiritual needs of each individual child.
- The Christian values that are 'a constant breeze blowing through the school'
- The links between the school and church that create a wider caring community

Focus for development

- The inspection has identified no major area for development because of the on-going climate of review, development and action by staff and governors

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

The ethos of the school is firmly rooted in Christian values that permeate every aspect of life. Faith and spirituality play a central role throughout the school and ensure that the vision and aims of the school are successfully realised. This results in an enjoyable and exciting learning environment, in which every child is valued as a unique individual. Each child is nurtured through challenge and support to achieve his/her academic and personal potential. A monthly value based on 'Values in School' is explored in worship and developed in each class and playground. Pupils are role models of Christian values in action explaining 'we belong to a church school and try to follow the example of Jesus.' Children are often asked, or ask themselves 'What would Jesus have done?' to resolve a dilemma. Behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent because love, care and respect drive relationships. The school enjoys a highly successful record of achievement because staff and children jointly create an exciting curriculum. Pupils are confident, mature and articulate with a sense of humour that reflects the joy of being in school. Pupils share responsibility for each other through the school council and buddy system, supported by the 'Speak out box'. A pupil survey suggested the peer mediators were no longer needed, as 'we don't fall out any more'. Pupils enjoy recognition of their achievements in 'star of the week' and lunch with the headteacher. The high profile of Christian values, the creative curriculum and a programme of visits and visitors, ensures that pupils are well prepared for their lives in a multi-cultural society. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding, supported by a range of sports and arts clubs. Some clubs are led by members of the community including the vicar and ensure strong links between school and village communities. The Eco-club raises awareness of caring for the environment and the rich outdoor resources of the school. Pupils recognise the need to care for others and support a number of local and national charities. The distinctive Christian character is reinforced by displays throughout the school.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school as a time to explore Christian values and the church year that are further developed in classroom discussion. Themes are displayed in every classroom and are shared with parents in newsletters, often with appropriate quotes. Children describe worship as 'time to have a conversation with God as a help and guide.' The comprehensive policy ensures everyone is aware of the purpose and structure of worship. The school has addressed the focus for development from the last inspection and children now take a major responsibility for worship. The head, vicar and foundation governor meet regularly to oversee planning and evaluation. The worship group plan, deliver and evaluate acts of worship explaining 'we have to make sure that we understand the messages so that younger children can also understand.' They create responses such as 'God is good, God is truth and God is beauty. Praise Him.' The school council has examined a pupils survey and has suggested development for worship. Adults and pupils are engaged and enjoy worship with a range of formats. Pupils make a special time in the hall, and understand the difference between assembly and worship, marked by a lighted candle. The singing, in parts and harmony is joyful. Pupils value reflection and prayer, explaining 'it helps us to think more about how to be like Jesus.' The vicar offers in church the private prayers written by children in classroom prayer boxes. The regular input from the vicar gives the opportunity to further challenge the thinking and knowledge of the Bible by older pupils. This enables them to explain the importance of Bible stories and Christian values in everyday life. The priority given to art in worship and religious education (RE) is seen in displays jointly created by each class. For example, the displays on aspects of Easter have children's initial ideas and also include prayers. The church is used for festival services when parents the school join reinforcing the belonging to a wider worshipping community.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding.

RE has a high priority in the school and is led by a very effective coordinator. Governors are fully informed of current position and developments through reports. The comprehensive policy, scheme of work and planning created by the coordinator supports teachers in adding a personal perspective and ensures coverage and assessment opportunities. Observations, book trawls and effective end of unit levelling using 'I can statements' results in pupils making secure progress to achieve above age related expectations. Pupils know what is expected of them because of shared learning objectives and very effective marking procedures. These include self-assessment by pupils and written responses to questions that further thinking. Pupils recognise the importance of learning about other faiths 'to share values and show respect.' They have a good knowledge of Bible stories and readily explain their significance and meaning. Teaching has many outstanding features that ensure lessons are never less than good. Teachers have great enthusiasm and knowledge. This ensures good class management and a lively pace. Children know what is expected of them because of learning objectives. Their books reflect a range of learning styles and notes to reflect learning when not recorded in writing. Teachers continually make challenges for reflection and informal assessment, ensuring all children are involved in responding. They use effective questioning and every opportunity for language development. For example, in a reception class exploring their own responses to 'happy and sad times' before empathising with the friends of Jesus at Easter, the teacher initially talked about feelings, before referring to emotions. Older children explored the gospel narratives of the garden of Gethsemane, recognising and explaining the metaphor and symbolism of 'this cup of suffering.' A Y3/4 class as part of a unit on Sikhism created a langar and recalled their learning as they shared a meal before exploring special Christian meals. Teaching assistants are partners in learning, sharing teaching, supporting groups and individuals and recording comments as part of assessment.

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

The headteacher has a passion to ensure that every individual is successfully nurtured within a Christian learning environment to achieve his/her personal potential. This is shared by staff and governors who all constantly examine, review and develop practice and policy to ensure that the aims of the school are successfully met. The headteacher has high expectations of staff who are nurtured by constant and structured support. At all levels there is a very effective learning situation resulting in challenge, support and success for children. Adults are role models of Christian values in action. Foundation governors have an active role in school and ensure the distinctive Christian character is a continuation of a living faith that is shared with everyone. There is on-going discussion resulting from many opportunities for informal visits, observations and surveys by governors. The recent audit of the Christian character is accurate in its findings regarding the ethos, Anglican faith and profile of RE that create a sense of continuing community. The Christian character of the school is recognised in the school improvement plan with links to RE, worship and ethos. Parents are proud of the school, the impact of Christian values, the dedication of the headteacher and staff and links with the church. They state that 'children know they are valued and safe in school.' Other comments include 'staff are warm, caring and approachable. They ensure that children really enjoy being in school and don't realise that they are learning. It is not just about SATS.' The successful Wigginton Association brings parents and the wider community together to support fund raising events in school. The school also benefits from links with church and the proceeds of the weekly 'Wigginton café' well supported by parents and children.