



Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Lawrence Church of England Lower School
Manor Lane, Wymington, Rushden NN10 9LL



Diocese of St Albans

LA:	Bedfordshire
SIAS Inspection:	28 th February 2008
Previous S23 Inspection:	March 2003
URN:	109628
Headteacher:	Mary Haynes
SIAS Inspector Name:	Lyn Field
SIAS Inspector No:	NS 151

School Context

This small school receives pupils from Wymington and surrounding villages. They are mostly White British and come from favourable backgrounds. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average and few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The parish has been without a vicar for more than three years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Lawrence as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Pupils enjoy being in school and their needs are well cared for by the staff. The importance the school places on beliefs and values gives a distinctive shape to the curriculum so that pupils make good progress in their spiritual and cultural development. There is a growing understanding of how the Christian ethos has implications for everyone involved in the life of the school.

Established strengths

- The quality of care staff show for pupils
- The stimulating quality of pupil discussion in RE lessons
- The awareness pupils have of different cultures locally and world wide

Focus for development

- To involve pupils, staff, governors and parents in the evaluation of the Values programme.
- To make use of assessment in RE to help teachers set tasks at appropriate levels
- To set clear priorities for improvement with details of how these are to be monitored and evaluated.

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

Pupils are happy and keen to learn. They are welcoming and model good relationships for younger pupils. They say their teachers put a lot of effort into caring for them and understanding their individual needs. This builds their confidence in taking responsibility for each other and tackling new challenges. Pupils respond well to any opportunity to explore spiritual, moral and cultural issues so their personal development is good. Their ability to talk about global issues is particularly strong because the school draws on the particular expertise of staff and families to plan special activities, such as a Hannukah day. Year 2 pupils, for example, explain how Thanksgiving celebrations commemorate significant events in the history of a people and can show there are common strands in the values held by American Indians and Christian societies. The introduction of Values Education has provided the staff with a useful tool in ensuring behaviour is consistently good. Pupils now have a far richer vocabulary to express their feelings and reflect on the way things happen in school. They say thinking more about peace and respect has helped them to forge new friendships and to make the way they work in teams even better. Each value is given a specifically Christian dimension in worship and some values, in particular simplicity, are challenging pupils to think more deeply. Informally, staff and governors agree the focus on values has made a difference to how well pupils learn and recognise that work needs to incorporate all aspects of school life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Worship is clearly established in the life of the school and is organised in ways that benefit different age groups. The themes now include the values being taught in the classrooms. This means pupils have a clear Christian understanding of each one. Behaviour is good and the presence of staff enhances the sense of belonging. The youngest children enjoy coming together with the whole school and are able to talk about the different prayers they know and when they use them in the day. New ideas to improve worship are included in the school development plan. It is already clear that these are helping all pupils to be more actively involved. For example, two members of staff have taught pupils to sign the words of songs and have introduced a broader range of music from their own experience of church worship. The parish worker involves Year 4 pupils in simple drama and a Muslim family regularly share what is important in their worship. These developments draw on pupils' own creativity and help them to see how faith is central to the lives of people in their own community. Pupils value the times of quiet reflection. One child summed up their views, '*it is not about giving answers but working out what things mean to you.*' They understand the meaning of simple rituals but have a limited knowledge of symbolism in worship because they have not had the chance to experience the breadth of Anglican worship over the last few years.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory

Pupils enjoy discussions in RE because they are motivated by the stimulating questions that teachers pose. In the best lessons they reflect on their broader knowledge and make some perceptive observations. For example, in a Year 4 class studying religious leaders, pupils suggested that Jesus often acted as a selfless servant and trained his disciples in the way that God had prepared Moses as a leader. Teachers encourage pupils to contribute ideas and help them to work out their lines of argument. This gives them the confidence to tackle difficult problems and lessons continually develop their religious thinking. The level of understanding that pupils achieve is above average but is of a higher standard than the written work they produce. This is because the tasks they are given do not always focus on what they need to learn in the lesson and some of the more practical and imaginative activities are not set on a regular basis. The school does not yet have a system of assessment in place for RE and so there is no information to help teachers pitch the level of activities appropriately for different pupils. RE makes a positive impact on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils across the school. In Year 1, for example, pupils are in awe of the vestments that the parish worker and church warden show them. They have been well prepared for this session and this shows in the pertinent questions they raise. One child asks 'Do baddies wear beautiful clothes too?'

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

The school makes an honest and accurate assessment of itself as a church school. It recognises the positive impact it has on how well pupils achieve and identifies appropriate areas to improve in the school development plan. A start has been made in involving staff and governors in the shaping of the plan but the arrangements for monitoring lack a clear focus and this slows down the rate of progress. Governors make reports on their visits and there is informal discussion between members of staff but there is not yet a process in place to identify what has been achieved overall and what needs to happen next. For example, there has been insufficient reflection on how Values Education is making a difference to behaviour and relationships at all levels and the implications of its Christian context for governors, staff and parents. The school is beginning to access appropriate training but it is sometimes slow to be implemented because it is not made a priority for everyone involved. The foundation governors now have a better understanding of their specific responsibilities. The headteacher and staff work hard to maintain good relations with the church and everyone values the efforts made by the parish worker during the long absence of a vicar. The lack of clergy presence in the school, however, significantly limits the pupils' experience of what it means to be part of a Christian community.