

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Leverstock Green Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Green Lane  
LEVERSTOCK GREEN  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD  
Hertfordshire  
HP3 8TH

#### Diocese: St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2006

Date of last inspection: October 2000

School's Unique reference number: 117416

Headteacher: Alan Phair

Inspector's name and number: Lyn Field NS 151

#### School context

This larger than average primary school provides care for pupils from 8am to 6pm. It is set in a relatively prosperous area but children come from a mix of social backgrounds and most are white British. There have been significant changes in staff in the last two years. The school was close to the Buncefield industrial fire in December 2005 and this has made a significant impact on the community as well as causing damage to the building.

#### Summary Judgement

This is a good church school that serves its community in a strong partnership with the church. Christian values of honesty, love and trust characterise the leadership of the school. Children learn to really respect and care for each other so that pupils of all abilities and faiths can play a full role in this worshipping community.

#### Established strengths

- The headteacher and vicar provide strong spiritual leadership and create a sense of one community between the school and the church.
- Worship is central to the daily life of the school.
- Children of all abilities and faiths feel valued.
- All adults in the school are excellent role models for care and respect

#### Focus for development

- To develop a clearer understanding of spiritual development across the curriculum
- To develop self-evaluation in order to identify the impact of the Christian ethos on children's achievement

#### How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?

This is a good school in meeting the needs of all learners through its distinctive Christian character.

The unique strength of this school is that the children explain with real conviction how their school responds to the needs of all learners. They believe that being part of such an inclusive school teaches them lessons for life because they understand how to work in partnership with children with particular difficulties and of different faiths. Initiatives in teaching and learning are helping children to learn more effectively but they also make a significant difference to their personal development. The best example is 'learning partners' because children explain this means you learn to value people who wouldn't naturally be friends and to care for them as well as working with them. The spiritual dimension to the curriculum is good because teachers ensure that children make connections between their learning and their own lives in the wider context of human experience. A philosophy lesson showed how children are developing good enquiry skills and can raise questions of a spiritual and moral nature. Spiritual development, however, is not clearly identified in curriculum plans or promoted consistently in classroom displays. It emerges from good teaching and from the emphasis placed on values but the school is not clear how to ensure it is part of every subject. The school listens to children and responds to their concerns. This is both on a whole school level in response to surveys and at a personal level.

Teachers take great care in writing or talking with any child who has placed a personal issue in the classroom 'worry box'. Honesty and trust, therefore, characterise relationships in the school and ensure that each child feels valued. Children appreciate the weekly awards especially if they were not aware that some act of kindness had been noticed. They say it motivates them to do the right thing for its own sake. All adults provide excellent role models and office staff act out the Christian ethos of the school in their response to everyone who comes through the door. The same Christian values are the basis of the headteacher's leadership in providing both pastoral and professional care for all staff.

#### **What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?**

Collective worship makes a good impact on the school community. Worship is led in such a way that it affirms all those with a personal faith. It is predominantly Christian but children of other faiths contribute their prayers and talk about their festivals which enriches the experience for everyone. Times of reflection involve those for whom faith is uncertain and children are adamant that this helps them understand what it means to be part of a Christian community. Pupils have very positive attitudes to worship. They understand its purpose and are keen to be more involved. This is because members of staff create a very special atmosphere to make it a distinctive time of the day. Collective worship strengthens the school's relationship with the Church because themes reflect the cycle of the Church year and the vicar's weekly assembly relates to Sunday worship and includes a simple form of liturgy. The headteacher and the vicar have a clear idea of what they want to achieve and have already made a significant impact in placing worship at the heart of the school. The school has identified the need for regular evaluation so that it can identify the strengths on which to base future development. Children say that without worship there would be a massive gap in the life of the school as it is a time to come together and to pray. All this means that worship is a natural place to celebrate key events in the life of the school such as the leavers' service. It is also well enough established to embrace the local community in times of difficulty as happened in the Christmas service following the Buncefield incident.

#### **How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?**

The leadership and management of the school, as a church school, are good. The headteacher has a real passion for this school and for this school as a church school. He has brought about a significant change to the atmosphere of the school because Christian values underpin every area of school life. The Christian ethos is now such an integral part of what the school does that the governors rightly do not see it as a separate issue. This means, however, that when they evaluate the school's performance they miss the opportunity to identify exactly how Christian values make a difference to children's achievements. The ethos of the school is strengthened by the high profile given to RE and the new co-ordinator is given quality time and training to manage the subject. Care of pupils and the central place of worship now characterise the school. They are the result of the leadership provided by the headteacher and the vicar. Children are enthusiastic about Christian Aid week, collecting supplies for the emergency night shelter and attending the Saturday Pentecost workshop. The vicar is available in school each week as part of his parish ministry. It is clear a sense of one community with the Church has been achieved. In any major incident the strength and depth of a school's ethos is tested. In this case the school has worked with the Church to meet the needs of children and families well beyond the first few days and the service in church. The presence of Diocesan clergy and officers conveyed a message about being part of the wider family of the Church. This school has proved its Christian values are deeply embedded and has given real meaning to the church school serving its community.

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