

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

High Wych Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Sawbridgeworth

Herts

CM21 0JB

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire

SIAS Inspection: 4th May 2009

Previous S23 Inspection: 21st February 2006

URN: 117398

Headteacher: Mandy West

SIAS Inspector Name: Alan Thornsby 137

School Context

High Wych is a popular school that serves a wide area as well as the immediate locality. Most pupils are White British and the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties is lower than average. The school has a wide range of awards and is presently working towards the Basic skills Quality Mark and the International Award.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of High Wych School as a Church of England school are good

High Wych is a good church school with many developing strengths. These have enabled the school to continue to flourish. The close links with the church and village communities play a significant role in the personal and academic development of all pupils.

Established strengths

- The vision and drive of the Senior Management Team, staff and governors led by the head to maintain and develop the ethos of school
- The impact of the Christian ethos on pupils' academic and personal development
- The strong links between school and church

Focus for development

- Formalise the planning and evaluation of worship themes to inform future development.
- Give pupils a greater understanding and experience of being part of a multi-faith society

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

The strength of the relationships between all members of the school community reflect the Christian values of love, care and respect in action in daily life and routines. All pupils know they are unique and valued regardless of their backgrounds. They have very positive attitudes to school and learning. They are confident and articulate and describe teachers as being 'fun but fair. They help us do our best and push us to work at the next level'. Pupils have an effective voice in school having contributed to the revised aims and mission statement. They can share worries anonymously through the 'worry boxes' found in each class. Strong links between religious education, worship and personal, social and health education reinforce the ethos of the school. The school has a range of incentives and

rewards, including golden time and house-points to encourage achievement. Pupils describe the school ethos as being a preparation for life. This is seen in their compassion and charity support for those less fortunate, as well as a responsibility to the environment through the 'eco recycling' scheme and the allotment. Spiritual development is good because links with music and the effective use of the school grounds within the curriculum. This includes a gardening club and observations of a kestrel nesting site. An annual art project linked to the village community has given pupils opportunities to explore Christian symbolism and the links to St. James in a stained glass window. Although pupils have a good awareness of their own culture that includes an annual Maypole celebration, they have little direct experience of other cultures. To redress pupil awareness of cultural diversity the school has enriched the curriculum to include RE days, links with a school in Venezuela, French and Spanish signage around school and a Black history week. The school is also forging links with a school in London from where pupils were evacuated in WW11. Displays throughout the school reflect the Christian character and offer challenge to pupils thinking through reflective questioning.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school is developing a cycle of themes based Christian values using 'A teacher's dozen'. The present planning and assessment is informal and the school has identified the need to develop more rigorous planning and evaluation systems to inform future planning cycles. Pupils experience a range of leaders, including the vicar and lay reader who alternate leading whole school worship and worship with the reception class. Pupils value worship as 'a time to learn about what Jesus wants you do' and 'a time to learn how to be useful in society'. They gain confidence by reading and role-play involvement in worship. Pupils are familiar with the surroundings of the church and the Christian calendar because of weekly visits for class worship. Use of the church also includes Festival and leavers' services when pupils are presented with a Bible. The role of the church in the life of pupils is prominent because achievement assembly recognises their work 'in front of God'. Prayer, including the Lord's Prayer, is an important part of school life and pupils are familiar with the need for silence and reverence, reminded by the vicar to 'find that quiet place inside you to talk to God'. This supports pupils in their understanding and use of prayer to 'speak to God about worries and get things off your chest'. Involvement in the 'Tree ceremony' to share good intentions, written on leaves, provides further opportunities for personal reflection. The links between home, school and church are reinforced by the use of the 'Travelling Crib' during Advent.

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

Throughout a further period of staff and governor change the head has maintained the vision and ethos of the school. This has been achieved by including the views of all in a revised mission statement that all are committed to because of the shared ownership. The staff have developed into a united team. They are involved in all aspects of school life and moving the school forward because of continuity and consistency of approach. Awareness of Christian principles and constant reference to respect and honesty reinforce decision-making. The diocesan advisor has led a training session on the distinctive nature of a church school that has enabled the governing body to begin to use this to develop the school. The changes in staff and members of the governing body have resulted in a greater awareness of the need to revisit and keep in mind the distinctive nature of the school. The school has an open door policy that reflects the close working partnership between home and school. Parents highly praise the school for the way it recognises and develops pupils as unique individuals, a typical comment being 'this school is unbelievably fantastic. The values it holds have allowed my child to be who he is'. They also value the way 'going to church is part of the learning day in school'. Parental support is also shown in the support of the PTA that has recently donated a trim trail that is enjoyed by pupils. The school enjoys very close links with the church and village communities, being a central part of the village

arts festival. A number of groups from the village use the school, giving them a greater awareness of its work.

SIAS report May 2009 High Wych