

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Leverstock Green Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Green Lane,
Hemel Hempstead,
Herts
HP2 4SA

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Hertfordshire

SIAS Inspection: Monday 08 June 2009

Previous S48 Inspection: 18 May 2006

URN: 117416

Headteacher: Alan Phair

SIAS Inspector Name: Bob Hopcraft

SIAS Inspector No: 484

School Context

Leverstock Green Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a larger than average primary school on the edge of the town of Hemel Hempstead. While the area around the school is prosperous and semi-rural, pupils come from a mix of social backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of *White British* origin but the proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is increasing. The numbers of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Leverstock Green VC Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

This is because the Christian values of love, respect and forgiveness lie at the very heart of the school's everyday life. These values are modelled by pupils and staff and are understood by everyone within the school community. Through high quality acts of worship and through providing opportunities for quiet reflection, there is a real commitment to developing the spiritual life of all pupils. Leaders are fully committed to the development of an inclusive and forward-looking Church school, which provides for the needs of everyone within the local community.

Established strengths

- The vision and leadership of the headteacher for the school as a Church school;
- The outstanding links with the local Church and community;
- The commitment to the Christian values of love, respect and forgiveness which lie at the heart of the school's ethos;
- The outstanding relationships at all levels and the school's commitment to inclusion.

Focus for development

- Provide further opportunities for spiritual development by establishing reflective areas within classrooms and embedding their use in the school's practice.

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

This is because everyone associated with the school is clear that the Christian values of love, respect and forgiveness lie at the heart of all that happens in this outstanding Church school. Parents remark on how pupils "... feel safe and valued in their school. They learn to respect themselves and others in a caring environment". As a result, relationships are outstanding at all levels and the behaviour of pupils is excellent. Pupils care for one another and grow into well-motivated young people with a genuine commitment to good citizenship. Because of this, they show great compassion towards others and have real empathy with others' points of view. Co-operation, teamwork and a strong sense of family underpin the school's ethos and this is evident in its everyday life. Learners recognise the important part that Christian values play in their development and can speak openly about the positive impact these have on their everyday lives. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good, enabling pupils in year 5, for example, to demonstrate a good understanding of *Fair Trade* and the impact that this can have on global understanding and equality. The school has worked hard since the last Section 48 inspection to ensure that pupils' spiritual development is well provided for and has made good use of support from the Diocese to develop this. The recent introduction of the prayer box and garden areas have further enhanced the many opportunities that exist for quiet thought and reflection and to experience the wonders of the natural world. The many bright and interactive displays around the school also offer pupils opportunities to think more deeply and to consider the impact that what they learn has on their everyday lives. For example, pupils have been asked to identify five pillars for their own lives, based on the *Five Pillars of Islam* and older pupils, through a study of images of Christ in paintings, are able to discuss feelings and thoughts, encouraging one pupil to write "*His head is bowed, seeming sad and worried. He feels as though he is concealing a secret he will soon have to reveal*". The school has identified the establishment of reflective areas in each classroom as the next step in developing provision for spiritual development still further.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Pupils are very positive about collective worship and have many opportunities for active participation. They are particularly pleased to be actively involved in the Church services, which illustrate one aspect of the very strong links between church and school. Pupils often take a lead in worship through readings, saying prayers and being involved in drama. As a result, worship is often inspirational and pupils say that it plays an important part in their lives. As one pupil wrote: "*It is a time when we make friends, even with our enemy. We speak to God and Jesus and learn God's way*". Pupils know that it is a special time in the school day and this is signalled by the lighting of a candle and the saying of responses, which have been adapted to be easily understood by the children. As a result, pupils of all ages are able to engage in worship and to genuinely understand its meaning and importance. Prayer, songs, stories and time for quiet reflection are all key components of worship. Pupils are proud of their school prayer and can talk about the values that are reflected in it. Worship is well planned, ensuring that it matches the age and experience of pupils, and strong links with the wider curriculum ensure that worship is also a time for learning and development. This enables pupils to show a good knowledge of bible stories and of the key festivals of the Christian years and of other faiths. School leaders evaluate the quality and impact of worship regularly by talking to pupils and through questionnaires, which has helped the school to improve and develop worship over a number of years to its present outstanding quality.

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

School leaders have taken every opportunity since the last Section 48 inspection to develop its self evaluation and to link this to the strong values which underpin its everyday life. The headteacher has been inspirational in promoting and developing this ethos and in this he has been very well supported by staff, governors and clergy. A good example is the way in which the headteacher, vicar and foundation governors have nurtured an understanding among all stakeholders of the values that the school holds dear and through the *Christian Values Study* of 2007-8 have reinforced and strengthened the school's commitment to its central values of respect, forgiveness and love. As a result, all those involved with the school are clear about its Christian foundation and the importance that is attached to this aspect of its development. There is a clear link in the school plan between self evaluation and actions for improvement as a Church school. The strong commitment to improvement has ensured that very good use has been made of professional development and training opportunities and the impact of this is evident in the improvements made since the last inspection. Links with the local community and the church are outstanding and the many links that bind them encouraged one Foundation Governor to comment "*The Church and the school are one place – they just exist in different buildings!*" The commitment to developing a fully inclusive school, which provides extended care for pupils throughout the day, reflects the genuine desire to provide the very best for all pupils, whatever their needs. Leverstock Green is a school where every child really does matter.