

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Peter Hills with St Mary's and St Paul's Church of England Voluntarily Aided Primary School**

2 Beatson Walk  
Rotherhithe  
London  
SE16 5ED

**Diocese:**

**Southwark**

School's Unique reference number: 100837

Date of inspection: 6 and 7 May 2008

Date of last inspection: October 2003

Headteacher: G McLoughlin

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number: L Macfarlane 277

### **School context**

Peter Hills is a popular one-form entry school in a leafy area beside the Thames where ethnic diversity is growing. Local family housing is limited so that those with more than two children often move out of the neighbourhood and mobility throughout Key Stage Two is high. A lack of affordable housing has also contributed to a recent high turnover of staff. These factors affect school standards. There is a higher than average number of learners qualifying for free school meals or with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Approximately one third of families are regular Anglican worshippers.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Peter Hills as a Church of England school are good.**

Established over 400 years ago Peter Hills is well known in this community and respected as a place of good Christian education. Many parents were themselves pupils and all interviewed held the school in high regard as a school promoting Christian values. Churches in three parishes effectively support the school, actively strengthening its Christian identity. The higher than average mobility of learners and teachers however, provides a particular challenge to the school in its progress to further raise standards.

### **Established strengths**

- the reputation of the school for good Christian education in the local community.
- the relationship of the school with three parishes.
- the Christian love and care shown by learners, Staff and Governors to each other and visitors.

### **Focus for development**

- express clearly in the schools documents its existing good practice as an Anglican school.
- ensure regular self-evaluation for all aspects of Peter Hills as a Church of England VA School.
- strengthen induction policies and in-service training to enable staff to more consistently deliver high levels of teaching and learning in Religious Education (RE).

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

Peter Hills School offers a warm welcome to all: learners, staff and visitors. This is an expression of the high value placed on people as individuals and as those who God loves. Learners are consequently peaceful, happy and fulfil their learning potential to average or good standards for their individual abilities. Parents are proud to bring their children here, there are usually more applications than places, and few could suggest improvements. One Mum said "Its just brilliant!"

Christian concern for the individual needs of each learner is also expressed in the outstanding commitment to individual learning programmes. There is a comprehensive SEN support system and a gifted and talented programme. A Pupil Development Centre has recently been established as an effective new initiative between the Borough and the school and is already showing significant benefits. Specific learners' social and emotional development is improving when supported by the Learning Mentor individually or in small groups, and the school is also showing its care for every learner through additional mainstream class sessions so that every child feels special. Targeted learners are overcoming their barriers to learning such as low self-esteem, lack of friends and bereavement issues, so that through a whole-staff approach daily frustrations are minimal and learners are well behaved throughout the school. Emphasis within the school about it as a caring Christian community also extends to playtimes. These are improved through staff intervention so that learners form happy relationships, know how to resolve conflict and live peacefully alongside each other.

Learners are successfully challenged to show Christian concern for the needs of others through class lessons, collective worship and the outstanding caring moral ethic set throughout the school. Funds are raised as a whole school and as individual classes to support charitable work throughout the year, for example for Children in Need, and the school has helped to set up a school garden in a South African township. The School Council helps to choose these charities and meets regularly to also allow learners input in managing the school. This comprehensive approach is a demonstration of the school an inclusive, encouraging and Christian environment. Management of the building is given a similar sensitivity with calming music and statues of Saints in the entrance area setting the scene throughout the clean and well ordered premises for a positive and spiritually uplifting place in which to learn. There are limited areas for ongoing prayer in classrooms and religious symbolism or interactive displays are rare in anywhere other than communal areas.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.**

Most learners speak of a special significance between their daily act of collective worship, their school day and their lives. Many particularly appreciate the weekly celebration of Eucharist with about twenty participating as communicants in addition to some staff. The weekly Eucharistic presence of various local Vicars supports an extraordinarily warm relationship between the entire school community and the wider church. One learner said, "The church is not a place, we are the church." The effectiveness of collective worship is also evident in the comments of parents who value its centrality and importance in the life of the school.

The Biblical focus for the Eucharist sets a topic for the whole week's worship within an engaging pattern of themes that stretch throughout each term. This provides a good, balanced context for worshippers to reflect on their faith. Opportunities for learners to express themselves spiritually, or appreciate the awe of God, are restricted by the rhythm of worship and the routine of hymns, prayers and readings, which allows little time for reflection or response. Learners contribute ably and willingly in the Eucharist with prayers they have written, and by reading Scripture. Songs are well chosen and sung with joy and meaning. Daily prayers are said at the beginning and end of the day and before lunch, and learners throughout the school are familiar with the Lord's Prayer giving them a further good introduction to an Anglican life of devotion.

Worshippers of other faiths are happy to participate in collective worship and appreciate the Christian nature of the school. One Muslim employee said, "I am always treated very well here". There are no learners excluded from worship despite the growing cultural diversity and this is a tribute to the school. Younger learners however are not always fully included in the worshipping

life of the school community. Whilst documents state that the whole school worships daily the nursery class attend only on special occasions and the reception class do not participate in the Eucharist until the summer term.

### **Religious Education is satisfactory.**

Standards of Religious Education (RE) are satisfactory. Higher ability learners are identified and extended in their experiences so that at least average levels are achieved and some learners reach good standards. The Southwark RE syllabus is effectively implemented and the content and resources of lessons are well planned for Years One to Six. Experiences for the Foundation Phase are not as fully programmed or resourced with learners in the early years being less aware of their school's faith basis or their own spiritual development. Education in other faiths is accurate, sensitive and interesting to learners. Parents appreciate this good teaching in the context of Christian values and one stated, "I am grateful that RE is not forced on the children but that they are able to explore and chose for themselves."

The RE co-ordinator contributes significantly to the management of this subject. She has implemented the school's policies for assessment and record keeping well with clear examples of learners attainment kept to inform teachers of progress and standards. Over the last two years particularly she has given an immense amount of support to staff, especially those newly qualified, as turnover has been so high. In short amounts of time she has enabled all teachers to improve their lessons to at least a satisfactory level and often higher. There is a positive and open-minded attitude amongst the staff to improving their performance in this subject. Sadly, the RE Governors' plan to revise the RE policy this year remains unfulfilled. New teachers consequently have to rely more heavily on the Co-ordinator for information making her work significantly more difficult.

The self-evaluation document (Toolkit) is generally an accurate reflection of the RE at Peter Hills and provides a helpful record of the development of this subject. However, because the RE policy has not been updated since 2000, there are some confusing anomalies between it and the other documents given to staff and interested parties. Particularly, lessons are stated as being the recommended 5% curriculum time but class timetables and learner's comments do not always indicate this. There are also unclear opportunities for learners' spiritual development or times for them to appreciate the wonder of what they are learning. Resources, especially of RE artefacts, are adequate but not plentiful enough to enable classroom displays or areas for prayer to extend learners ongoing and reflective opportunities. Particularly in the Foundation Phase, materials for play experiences to be built in to RE programmes are limited by low resource levels.

### **The leadership and management of the school as a church school is satisfactory.**

Parents stated very positively that over generations Peter Hills had consistently educated local children in a Christian tradition that they valued. They also warmly acknowledged its ongoing development and the approachability of its staff. The excellent support given by the three local parishes is unmistakable and successfully provides a variety of church perspectives. This established church commitment is also evident in pastoral care and social engagements as well as the active role played by Foundation Governors in the life of the school.

Whilst the headteacher and governors promote a distinctive and good Christian vision, this is not always clearly communicated in the documents presented to staff or parents and consequently consumes unnecessary time, especially during induction, through verbal explanations. Apart from RE, no self-evaluation (Toolkit) was available for this inspection so ongoing procedures for monitoring and reflecting upon the Christian vision were not evident and it was unclear whose role this actually was. The Governing Body had recently re-stated the school's Mission Statement, as one governor said, to "clearly convey a Christian mission", and this was being effectively embodied throughout the school although not always conveyed in written forms. Staff of all faiths felt very comfortable and supportive of this mission and all chose to attend the Christian acts of worship.

During this inspection the headteacher was on maternity leave. The deputy head, supported two days each week by a seconded headteacher, provided good leadership and showed strong commitment to the inspection. A greater number of Parent Governors were being recruited and appreciated their increased ability to "have a say" or create some "impact in the school".

Foundation Governors and Christian volunteers were active in their classroom help and the hearing of readers and were valued by learners and staff. Learners knew that their views about Peter Hills School were listened to and appreciated the opportunity provided through the School Council for expressing their views.

May 2008 SIAS report, Peter Hills with St Mary's and St Paul's CE VA Primary School,  
2 Beatson Walk, Rotherhithe, London, SE16 5ED