

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mathews Close
Halstead
Essex
CO9 2BH

Diocese of Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex
Date of inspection: 30 June 2008
Date of last inspection: February 2004
School's URN: 115133
Headteacher: Mr Craig Duncan
SIAS Inspector: Revd Richard Peers (N.S. 125)

School context

St Andrew's is an average sized school drawing pupils from the town of Halstead and its surrounding area. Pupils are almost all of White British origin and virtually all speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. The proportion known to qualify for free school meals is well below average. There are currently 243 pupils on roll.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's as a Church of England school are outstanding

St Andrew's is an extremely happy school in which the worship underpins all the school's activities. The school's leadership have an exemplary understanding of what it means to be a church school recognising the need for pupils to develop a sense of the presence of God. The process of developing the school's curriculum has been outstanding in including provision for spiritual development.

Established strengths

- The outstanding leadership of the head and deputy head teacher and their staff team
- The worship that is at the heart of the school's life
- The outstanding curriculum planning that identifies areas of spiritual development and opportunities to give pupils control of their own learning

Focus for development

- To develop the school site to enable spiritual development through beauty and silence

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

Pupils are rightly proud of their school where they feel safe and well cared for. They describe the school as a very happy place 'like a second family.' Pupils say that all incidents are dealt with quickly and they always feel confident speaking to adults if there is a problem. Pupils report that the school is a place for everyone. Learning Support Assistants made an outstanding contribution to the lessons seen and the quality of differentiation was very high indeed. Displays around the school are of a very high quality and reflect our multi-faith society. Pupils know that it is important to study a variety of faiths and that this helps everyone to feel valued and cared for.

Parents speak very positively of the school describing it as exceeding their highest expectations. They describe the occasions when their children's individual needs have been met in an outstanding way to bring about change and enable learning.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective Worship is at the heart of the school's life. Pupils thoroughly enjoy worship and recognise that it is 'the most important part of the day'. A very high priority is given to the worship and it is extremely well planned. Pupils know a wide variety of liturgical greetings and they are chosen to begin the worship with these. Pupils know that worship is about being together as a community in the presence of God and can explain that by worshipping together 'we can get to know God better'. The school worships together in the parish church each term and regularly celebrates the Eucharist. Pupils know that the bread and the wine are used because of Jesus' command to 'do this in remembrance of me', they can link this to his death and resurrection. The local clergy lead worship each week in school and pupils know that they are 'their' priests. They know that it is the task of a priest to pray and to know Jesus so well that other people will want to know him too. The head teacher works outstandingly well with the clergy and they are well integrated into the life of the school. An outstanding act of worship seen involved the head and one of the parish priests role-playing a conversation. Music in the school is outstanding. A hymn was extremely well sung and accompanied by a band including a wide variety of instruments and playing to a very high level.

Pupils know that prayer is about being friends with God and spending time with him as much as asking him for things. They value prayer before lunch and recognise that it helps to show that we should be grateful for the food we eat. Monitoring and evaluation of worship is well developed and there is outstanding opportunity for pupils to be engaged in this using written feedback. Governors also provide written evaluations of worship. The head and deputy head teacher have an outstanding understanding of the difference between assembly and worship. They recognise and are able to cultivate opportunities that 'transcend' the ordinary and give pupils an experience of the divine. However, pupils were not able to say where in school they could go for moments of quiet reflection or to spend time with God.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards in RE are high. Assessment in RE is exemplary using assessment pro-formas that clearly highlight the two attainment targets (learning about and learning from religions). These sheets are then used to create tracking sheets for each year group, which are clearly used to inform planning. One outstanding RE lesson was beautifully planned to build up pupils' understanding of precious objects, link that with special words – for which some pupils chose liturgical greetings used in the school's worship. These were then linked to the idea of keeping things in special boxes and all led to explaining why Jews wear *tefillin* (small boxes containing the words of a passage from the Bible) to pray. Pupils clearly recognised the steps in their learning and were able to make connections between their own lives and the lives of pious Jews.

Curriculum planning in the school is outstanding and pupils know that their teachers have worked extremely hard to make links between lessons. In another lesson seen the teacher very effectively highlighted the importance of making links for pupils. RE and spiritual development of pupils is built into the planning of teaching so that pupils know that God permeates all that they learn about. Through pupil planning of learning, peer and self assessment pupils are able to develop their independent learning skills, have control of their learning and are enabled to really understand how to progress to the next stage of their learning.

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

The leadership of the head and deputy head teacher is outstanding. They have a passion for the school's distinctiveness as a church school that informs all their decision-making. Pupils describe the head as 'like Jesus' because he 'tells us stories that change the way we think'.

Parents could not speak highly enough of the school and do not believe there are any significant areas for improvement.

Links with the parish church are outstanding. Pupils talk about the church enthusiastically; they can name people who worship there regularly and they believe that is their church. They describe the many visits they have made to the church for worship as 'the special times' of the year. They enjoy

visiting for RE lessons and learning about the meaning of the objects and signs in church. Pupils enjoy taking part in all the events of the parish's life and the worship seen on the inspection was the launch to pupils of the parish mission, which is about to take place. Pupils recently took part in the church fete singing hymns, playing music and demonstrating the 'Walk Through the Bible'. They explained that all of this showed that the whole town was just 'one family'. The Governing Body is very strong and has worked hard on the school's self-evaluation which is, if anything, a little too self critical.

SIAS report June, 2008, St Andrew's Halstead CO9 2BH