

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Augustine's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Kilburn Park Road,
London,
NW6 5XA

Diocese of London

Local authority: City of Westminster

Date of inspection: 27th April 2009

Date of last inspection: April 2005

School's unique reference number: 101125

Headteacher: Ms Suzanne Parry

SIAS Inspector: Miss Gladys Vendy (N.S. 299)

Context

St Augustine's is an oversubscribed one form entry school with a nursery, situated in North Westminster close to the boundaries of the local authorities of Brent and Camden. The school which was founded in 1895 serves the parish of St Augustine's, Kilburn. The main school is housed in a three storey Victorian building and the Foundation Stage is co-located in an adjacent building with Maida Vale Children's Centre. St. Augustine's High School, to which many pupils transfer, is on the same site. The school features among the highest deprivation indicators nationally and is in a very challenging multi cultural area. Nearly all the children live in social housing. 94% are from many ethnic minority backgrounds including the continent of Africa, Middle Eastern countries and Bangladesh. A higher than average number of children are refugees, asylum seekers or first generation immigrants. The mobility rate is high with newcomers often arriving without previous experience of education in this country. A large proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. A higher than average number of pupils is eligible for free school meals and have learning difficulties. 34% of pupils are from Christian backgrounds, the others being predominantly Muslim with some Hindus and Buddhists. Standards of achievement are rapidly improving and are generally in line with the national average following a period of considerable turbulence prior to the current Head Teacher's appointment five years ago. Staff stability has been achieved and recent changes have been due to promotion or re-location from London.

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

St Augustine's School was established to serve the local community. It does this by calmly welcoming all who come through its doors regardless of their faith. It achieves its aim to provide education in a Christian context whilst promoting mutual respect between all sections of the community.

Established strengths

- The clear Christian leadership and vision of the Head Teacher supported by the staff, the clergy and the Governing Body who work consistently in close collaboration ensures very good community cohesion and respect for each other.
- The strong links with the church impact upon the spiritual development of the children creating a harmonious and happy school.
- The developing partnership with the parents who are very well supported, often through challenging situations.

Focus for development

- Formal assessment in RE against attainment targets
- Formal evaluation and reporting of worship to the Governing Body

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

The school is very clear that it was established to serve the local community. It achieves this today through an inclusive approach to both children and parents where every child and its family are known, valued and nurtured. The Every Child Matters agenda is fully embedded and diversity is acknowledged, respected and celebrated. The Christian ethos is firmly embedded in every aspect of school life and promoted in all key documents and policies. There is plenty of visual evidence that this is a church school, from the cross mounted on an arch in the newly completed Early Years area to RE displays and Christian symbols in each classroom. The mission statement is clearly displayed around the school. In every discussion 'our school' and 'our children' were referred to manifesting the strong community feel. A child, who was not a Christian, said 'every person's religion is a part of the school'. Pastoral care is excellent and there are secure strategies to support social, moral and emotional issues. The behaviour of the children is outstanding and their care for each other shows in the way they listen and respect others' viewpoints. The relationships between adults and children are relaxed and respectful. Very good provision is made for SEN and EAL children and there are excellent intervention strategies to meet the needs of individuals. Gifted and talented learners are challenged through extension programmes both within and outside of school time. The school provides a health and fitness breakfast club, an after school play centre and a wide variety of clubs and activities. The school has been awarded extended school status by the local authority. The school has strong links with the business community and the local church secondary school. There are very close links with the Maida Vale Children's Centre which shares the new Nursery building. The school council is an effective group which has successfully campaigned for a zebra crossing to make the road outside safer. Playground and dining room monitor jobs are advertised and pupils interviewed for these posts. Parents are also regarded as learners and parenting workshops and courses have been set up to support specific groups. One parent said he rated the school as 'twelve out of ten' and several said 'it is one happy family'. The school takes an active part in the local community entertaining in a care home for the elderly.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

The collective worship policy expresses the aim 'to build a community that sees God as the heart of the school'. This aim is overtly fulfilled through worship, prayer and the RE curriculum. Themes which reflect the liturgical year, the Anglican Church calendar, school events and key events in other faiths are planned between the RE/Worship leader and the RE/Worship Governor. The weekly pattern of worship includes clergy led worship either in school or in church. The Eucharist is celebrated regularly with children taking an active part. The Mass booklet is augmented by a service sheet for each Mass which gives pointers for reflection. The older children sit with the younger ones so that they can help them follow the service. A pupil of a different faith said it was 'fascinating observing Christian worship'. Children who follow Gospel values are recognised in the Celebration Assembly. Children and adults understand the power of prayer by making personal requests. During special times children are able to stay in school during lunchtimes to pray. The theme for the week was the meaning of mission which linked well with community cohesion. A prayer table on which was a lighted candle, cross, flowers and a statue of Mary provided the focus for reflection. Children came in calmly and silently to music. Peer discussion enabled them to talk about their faith leaders, sacred writings and showed a good understanding of the Golden Rule. This also promoted listening, recognition and reflection. Children joined in enthusiastically and obviously enjoyed worship. An understanding of the Anglican tradition is developed through celebrating major festivals and knowing responses and prayers. However, collective worship is not formally reported to the Governing Body. No children are withdrawn from collective worship or RE and they show a good understanding of the importance of these in school life. Parents who are Christians are invited to join the school for Mass and those who are not Christians are invited to observe worship in church.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good

Religious Education is the responsibility of the Deputy Head who is also the Collective Worship and RE co-ordinator and leads with knowledge, passion and enthusiasm. It is given a high profile in the curriculum being properly timetabled and well resourced. The recently revised scheme of work is tailored to meet the needs of the children and is based on the Diocesan scheme and the Solihull scheme of work. Close links with the worship themes ensure progression and coverage of moral, social and spiritual aspects within each term, recognising that we all have pathways to God. The teaching of RE in Key Stage 1 and 2 is shared between three people ensuring continuity and good quality provision. In the lessons observed the quality of learning and teaching was very good. Although attainment on entry is below average progress of pupils in RE is good. The RE action plan is having an impact on raising standards. Assessment is formative and recorded in comments to children and quotations from them. It is not yet fully established. The creative approach is effectively recorded in a variety of ways. In spite of their limited vocabulary pupils prior knowledge and understanding is good. The overall theme for the term of change, growth and re-birth was reflected in different ways throughout the school. Foundation Stage children were amazed at the rapid change from the previous week of the growth of their cress seeds and kept returning to looking at them. Michelangelo's 'hand of God' painting from the Sistine chapel was used to consider how God works through our hands. Cross curricular links with science encouraged Year 1 children to be hand detectives and to look at the uniqueness of their finger prints through a magnifying glass. Lower Juniors first followed up a previous lesson by being shown a double yolked egg - twice – one hard boiled, the other fresh. This prompted a lot of discussion and excitement. Children made links with their own religions and talked easily about hennaed hands at Eid and the stoning of the Kaaba during Haj. Although teaching was firmly rooted in Christianity, quotations from other sacred writings showed that all faiths were valued. A multi sensory approach to learning enhanced understanding. Each lesson finished with a period of quiet reflection. The upper juniors watched an excellent power point presentation about God's wonderful world and were able to link this with their rights and responsibilities to look after God's creation. In all lessons children were encouraged to express their beliefs. Children demonstrated that learning about religion could help them to learn from religion. The issue from the previous denominational inspection to maintain the high expectations and excellent standards has been sustained.

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

The Head Teacher, Leadership Team and Governors, who have a strong Christian vision for the school and work in close partnership, have made a positive difference in recent years to the strength of the school as a church school. The Head Teacher successfully demonstrates a vision where every individual matters and is cared for. The Foundation Governors are represented on all committees and are familiar figures around the school. The Chair of Governors is fully involved in the life of the school. Governors are linked to curriculum areas and a Governor of the month visits the school and reports to governor meetings. Parents speak positively of the school and the support from the staff team. Although language is a huge barrier to most parents and children very good procedures are overcoming this. Surveying the many parents whose understanding of English is limited is not easy but the parent governors have successfully helped this through using visual aids and asking a limited number of questions each day in the playground. In addition to the parent workshops this has led to parents developing good relationships with each other. There are very good induction procedures for children, staff and parents. Designated members of staff and an effective buddy system welcome newcomers. There are very clear action plans for both RE and Collective Worship. The school is very well supported by the diocese and the local authority. Evaluation of the school as a church school is rigorous and accurate and shows very good potential for further improvement.