

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Thundridge Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Ermine street

Thundridge

Ware

Hertfordshire

SG12 0SY

#### **Diocese of St Albans**

LA: Hertfordshire

SIAS Inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Previous S23 Inspection: 28<sup>th</sup> March and 1st April 2003

URN: 117408

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Grant

SIAS Inspector Name: Mrs Mel Adams

SIAS Inspector No: 58

#### **School Context**

Thundridge primary school is a smaller than average primary school with 90 children from Nursery to year 6. The year groups are organised into 4 classes. Situated in the parish of St Mary's Thundridge, pupils come from the village and a number of neighbouring villages. The majority of children are of white British heritage, speak English as a first language, and enter school with attainment around the national average. The percentages of children receiving free school meals or with learning difficulties or disabilities are both well below average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Thundridge Church of England Voluntary Controlled school as a Church of England school are good.**

The leadership of the Headteacher ensures that the school community works together in an ethos built on Christian values which underpin the foundation of the school, and this is supported by the governing body. Children hear and act upon these values, and as a result the climate for learning richly enhances social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

#### **Focus for development**

- Further develop church school self evaluation as part of the regular evaluation and development cycle.
- Monitor the impact of collective worship on the spiritual development of pupils.

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

Pupil voice is strong, and all children are involved in writing codes of conduct annually which underpin their good behaviour and ability to care for each other. They are happy and feel safe, having confidence to approach staff in any circumstance. They are very aware of the importance of values such as loving your neighbour, and respecting different faiths and cultures, which they hear about in assemblies. One child described the school as 'like a church, because we pray like a church'. As a result of excellent behaviour, and ownership of values such as forgiveness, children learn well and make good progress. Their security in relationship with adults enables them to ask big questions and challenge assumptions, relating religious stories, ideas and concepts to their own understanding. This was evident in a year 3-4 lesson on the childhood of Jesus during which an important discussion evolved about the responsibility of parents and children towards each other to ensure their safety. As a result of such learning experiences and the daily act of worship spiritual development is good and the extent to which pupils feel valued and special is outstanding. Children describe how they appreciate and accept the values and morals which they learn

in assemblies, and act upon them. Displays, in the assembly room and some classrooms, of children's art reflecting religious themes enhance the learning environment. Guatemalan crosses in the assembly room and entrance support the Christian ethos. Pupils are involved in regular fund raising, most recently for Barnado's, and have a long term commitment to a church school in Uganda for whom they fund raise and correspond as pen-pals. The ongoing effect of the impact of the school as an effective and distinctive school is further evidenced by a former pupil returning to the school to present a donation to the Ugandan school.

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

Collective worship is important in the life of the school community. It contributes to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils, who are able to articulate how what they learn in assemblies helps them to make right decisions and gives them opportunities to learn about Christianity and sometimes different faiths. Through the story of the Good Samaritan, a child was able to understand that, 'we help everyone, not just our friends and the people we like'. They are also able to recognise how the values they learn though assemblies, such as respect and treating others as you would like to be treated, are expressed practically in the weekly ABC assemblies which celebrate and affirm individual achievements and personal development. The school has yet to devise systems to assess the impact of collective worship on the spiritual development of pupils. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in planning for assemblies which are planned around themes such as people who make a difference, which give opportunities to develop understanding of Christian values. The Headteacher and all teaching staff lead assemblies regularly and the staff are supported by the Headteacher. Staff evaluate materials, and plan assembly themes together, and also respond to current events both locally and nationally, changing plans as necessary. The assembly room is welcoming, with a display of the events of Easter in art, and children's art marking the abolition of the slave trade. A focal point displays the school prayer, and values for living together as a community. The school has attempted to address the difficulties of lack of space by ensuring all children participate in a daily act of worship using classrooms, the village hall for special assemblies to which parents are invited, in addition to termly assemblies in church. Children participate well, eagerly answering questions, singing well, and respectfully participating in opportunities for reflection and prayer. Weekly visits to assembly by a local church worker, and monthly visits by the churchwarden who is also a governor, are greatly appreciated by the children who say that they help them to understand more about God and Christianity. Partnership with the church is an important part of the life of the school, and children are familiar with Anglican festivals and prayers. Through the termly assemblies in church and visits to church to support RE lessons, children understand the importance of the church as a place of worship.

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

The Head teacher's leadership is very clear about the vision for the school as a church school, in providing a caring community, underpinned by an understanding of faith and Christian values, and this is supported by the governing body. As a result, the quality of care and relationships throughout the school are outstanding. Children understand the importance of Religious Education, and are able to articulate how their knowledge of Christianity and different faiths is important in helping them to formulate their own attitudes and values. The vicar is a member of the governing body and takes part in termly assemblies in church. There are established links with the church, and the school contributes regularly to the parish magazine. Church school evaluation has begun to identify some areas of strength and areas for further development, but this is not always accurate in its judgment of its distinctive Christian character and the potential for future developments. Parents speak very highly of the school, and those who responded to a recent church school questionnaire show a good level of support for the school. They are confident that all staff are proactive in their partnership with parents, and that every child is treated as an individual and with great respect. Pupil voice has developed well since the last inspection, most recently by participating in the writing of a new mission statement. They are not yet

involved in discussions about the school as a church school. Links with the local community are good, for example a recent village celebration of the life of Thomas Clarkson was well supported by the school and involved all children participating.

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Thundridge Ware Hertfordshire SG12 0SY March 2008