

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Toddington St George Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School

Manor Road,
Toddington,
Bedfordshire
LU5 6AJ

Diocese of St Albans

LA: Bedfordshire

SIAS Inspection: Tuesday 03 June 2008

Previous S23 Inspection: 25 and 26 June 2003

URN: 109608

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Spencer

SIAS Inspector Name: Bob Hopcraft

SIAS Inspector No: 484

School Context

Toddington St George is a larger than average voluntary controlled lower school, serving a local community in generally favourable social circumstances. The school is set in extensive, well-maintained grounds, close to the local middle school. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is broadly in line with that expected nationally and as a result the number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The school's provision for pupils with hearing impairment reflects the above average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need. A period of relative turbulence, when there were three changes of headteacher within a very short time, has now passed and staffing and leadership are settled and clearly focused.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Toddington St George CofE VC Lower School as a Church of England school are outstanding

This is because of the strong commitment of the headteacher and other school leaders to the development of the school's Christian character, which is reflected in the outstanding relationships and strong commitment to the development and maintenance of a genuinely inclusive environment. As a result all who work and play here feel valued and develop a strong moral and spiritual base on which to live their lives.

Established strengths

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and governors for the school as a Church school;
- The excellent relationships between pupils and staff, underpinned by strong Christian values which are modelled at every turn;
- The strong commitment to inclusion, which ensures that all pupils make the best possible progress;
- The outstanding relationships with the local parish, churches of other denominations and the local community.

Focus for development

- Further develop the entrance to the school to ensure that it clearly reflects the school's Christian foundation and character;
- Build upon the existing close relationship with the local parish, to ensure that links with the newly appointed rector continue to enhance the school's Christian character;

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

This is because all learners feel valued and special, they all enjoy their work and are encouraged to give of their best, whatever their gifts and talents. St George's is a school where every child really *does* matter and there is a very strong commitment to inclusion for all. As a result, everyone is treated with respect and all feel secure within its bright and stimulating learning environment. Christian values are an essential part of the school's daily life and underpin all that it says and does, encouraging one parent to write that the school "... provides excellent values and beliefs, that are not only taught, but role modelled by the head and all members of the team". This, coupled with the strong emphasis on personal, social and health education ensures the outstanding personal development of each individual. There is an overwhelming commitment to teamwork at all levels and pupils support one another well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Many opportunities exist during the day for quiet thought and reflection and this helps to promote the spiritual development of each pupil. Involvement in developing codes of behaviour ensures that pupils develop a keen sense of right and wrong and moral and social development have been further strengthened in recent months through the introduction of the *SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)* materials into the curriculum and worship. Cultural development is greatly enhanced by a range of visitors and visits, for example year 4's recent participation in the *Faith Tour* in Bedford. Very good use is made of displays to promote spiritual and general learning. Of particular note are the displays of work relating to the *Art in Heaven* theme and the display of work on the theme of *The Creation* in the main hall. Signs and symbols of the Christian religion are used effectively throughout the school, however the entrance hall does not currently impact quite so positively on the visitor, as the school's Christian status is not so overtly evident here.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school and reflects its Christian character well. Acts of worship are varied and imaginative, with many opportunities for involvement by pupils in a number of ways. The recent "*Pop Connections*" initiative, enabling older pupils to produce a CD of faith-based songs, is a good example of this. Where possible, opportunities are provided for pupils to relate themes and ideas to their everyday life and the school's recent development of acts of worship for the foundation stage, based on chorus songs and stories, ensure that worship is well matched to the needs and ages of pupils. Acts of worship are well planned, based on the events of the Church year and a range of themes, including the SEAL materials. A variety of methods is used to record and evaluate the quality and impact of worship, including records of parents' views and comments. Pupils are positive about worship and say that it is an important part of their daily life in school, responding particularly well to visiting speakers, such as the *Open the Book* group who visit to lead worship each week. Very good use is made of prayer and song to enhance worship and pupils have opportunities to learn and understand more traditional prayers and hymns alongside writing and saying their own prayers and more modern songs. The recent lengthy interregnum, far from presenting a problem to the school, was seen as an opportunity to work with lay members of the church and to develop strong links with clergy from other local denominations. As a result the links with the local parish and community are outstanding and work has already begun to ensure that these links develop still further following the recent appointment of the new rector.

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

This is because the inspirational leadership of the headteacher over the past three years has done much to restore and develop the school's commitment to its Christian status and to set this at the heart of all that it does. In this she is well supported by staff and governors, who share her vision and have been fully involved in the school's evaluation of its progress as a Church school. The school's Christian vision is clear in all its public documentation: stakeholders are clear that it is a Church school and feel very strongly that it is a good Church school. There is a firm commitment to the development of all staff as leaders and the leadership of Religious Education, which supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, is particularly effective. Progress since the previous Section 23 inspection has been outstanding, further reflecting the commitment of the school's leaders to the development of its status as a Church school. Many opportunities have been taken for continuing professional development and good use has been made of courses provided by the Diocese. Links with the local churches and community are outstanding and the school, through its extended schools provision, is beginning to become a strong focal point for the community. Parents and pupils are heavily involved in local events and pupils have many opportunities for charitable giving, including the long-term commitment to the support of a child in Uganda.