

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Swithun's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School

**Ivel Road
Sandy
Bedfordshire
SG19 1AX**

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Bedfordshire

Dates of inspection: 3 May 2012

Date of last inspection: 9 December 2008

School's unique reference number: 109604

Headteacher: Mrs Anita Whitehurst (Acting)

Inspector's name and number: Ms Chris Westgarth 44

School context

St Swithun's is a smaller than average sized lower school. The school incorporates an Austistic Spectrum Condition Provision Unit. The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is above average. There is an acting head in place who has been appointed substantive head from September 2012. The school has an International Schools, Activemark, Heathy schools and Gold 'Sing-up' awards.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Swithun's as a Church of England school are good

St Swithun's is a good church school, which is valued by everyone. It is inclusive, all are welcomed and everyone is encouraged to reach their full potential. Staff have the highest regard for one another and for the pupils in their care and this has a significant impact on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils receive a good education underpinned by the Christian values of care, love, forgiveness and compassion.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the staff to nurturing pupils personal development
- The excellent relationships that promote respect throughout the school community
- The welcoming ethos of the school that creates a sense of belonging for everyone

Focus for development

- Continue to develop the distinctive Christian character of the school by further training for Governors and staff
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Collective Worship are effectively undertaken and outcomes shared
- Increase the use of interactive and creative opprtunities in Collective Worship and monitor its effectiveness

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

Visitors are warmly welcomed by children and adults alike, this reinforces love, care and respect that underpin the ethos of this school. There are excellent relationships between all members of the community with pupils and parents rightly saying *'St Swithun's is a really fun place, where everyone is included.'* This is evident in the way the Austistic unit is well integrated into the life of the school. Christian values are clearly embedded in the daily routines of the school. The display of the 'Inukshuk' the school symbol for values is seen clearly on entering the foyer. This coupled with the pebble display and statement *'All stones are separate but supporting each other'*, reinforces the inclusive, supportive nature of the school. The impact of Christian values on the lives and routines of the school is reflected in the ability of pupils to make clear links between the values and the teaching of Jesus. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) provision is strong and opportunities are used well to enhance the learning experience for all pupils. Behaviour observed was good and learners were polite and showed respect. Bright and interactive displays are effectively used to make links between Christian values, everyday life and areas of the curriculum. Displays are also used to reflect pupils' feelings and thoughts, for example the display on *If I was Prime Minister*, one pupil wrote *'I would help poor people and buy them some toys because they don't have many.'* The signs and symbols of the Christian religion are clearly displayed in key locations throughout the school. The delightful collaborative banner in the hall, reinforces the view that *God Made us all* and pupils are very proud of their work. Pupils enjoy caring for their school and grounds and as a result they enhance the learning environment. Year 4 enjoy being *'playground pals'* and wearing their hi-vis tabards. *Nurture groups* and *Enrichment days* are having a positive influence and this reinforces the care and respect of all. The breakfast club is a quiet oasis and offers a restaurant-like quality for users while creating a family atmosphere. Community cohesion is strong locally and internationally. Locally this is enhanced by the school's involvement at the community singing events and activities. Charitable giving is strong both locally and internationally with pupils keen to help those in need.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship is central to the school day and valued by pupils and staff alike. The themes are clearly planned, monitored and then evaluated by year 4 pupils but this is yet to be fully embedded. Older pupils are involved in setting the hall up ready for worship and for operating the projector and music systems. They perform these tasks with great confidence and calmness. Children enter and exit the hall quietly and with respect. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the *'Open the Book'* assembly team and enjoy singing in Collective Worship. There are good levels of participation and most pupils speak positively about worship however, some would like to be more involved with drama and other creative aspects of worship. Pupils talk with confidence about Bible stories and know right from wrong and are able to explain the meaning of forgiveness. The incumbent takes collective worship each week and the church building is regularly used for special services and visits. Children know the Lord's prayer and often write their own prayers in the prayer book. Knowledge and understanding of world faiths is strong and this is enhanced by many visits to multi-faith places of worship. Since the last inspection the focus on prayer has been enhanced and pupils see prayer as important. However, they are confused about the difference between prayer and reflection. Further opportunities for pupil prayers and space for quiet prayer will further enhance the worshipping experience and highlight the importance of prayer

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

The prospectus, policies, website and other documentation promote the school as a church school and the additional school sign on the High Street further raises the awareness. The school council are involved in decision-making and take their role very seriously. As a result, pupils are able to voice their desires and concerns. The acting headteacher knows the school well and is aware of the strengths and weaknesses, therefore, self evaluation is strong. Governors are effective in monitoring the distinctive Christian character of the school and recognise the need to develop this further. The governing body has in the past benefited from Diocesan training on the distinctive Christian character of the school and recognise that because of changes to the staff and governors now is an appropriate time for further training in this area. Whole school training for SMSC is planned for the Autumn term and this will strengthen the planning and monitoring of these areas. The incumbent and foundation governors are involved in the life of the school and visit weekly. The school is highly regarded in the community. Parents speak positively about the links between Church and School and the Christian ethos.