

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Lower School

Church Street
Clifton
Bedfordshire
SG17 5ES

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Bedfordshire
Date of inspection: 25 October 2012
Date of last inspection: 10 April 2008
School's unique reference number: 109616
Headteacher: Mrs Denise Gower
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

All Saints Clifton serves the village community of Clifton and the surrounding area. Currently there are 148 pupils who are mainly from a White British background. The school enjoys close links with the nearby parish church of All Saints. The headteacher has been in post for three years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of All Saints Lower School as a Church of England school are outstanding

All Saints Clifton has a very strong sense of being a worshipping and welcoming community, with Christian values and prayer an important part of school life. Everyone feels they belong and are encouraged to achieve highly. All are committed to 'Learning to live, Living to learn', which reflects the diocesan vision of 'Living God's love'.

Established strengths

- The well embedded commitment to living Christian values.
- The opportunities given to pupils in collective worship and religious education [RE], supporting their spiritual development.
- The close links with the church.
- The importance of prayer in the life of the school.

Focus for development

- Enhance the evaluation of collective worship involving both pupils and governors.
- Establish a forum for pupils and adults to dialogue together on the deep questions of faith and life.

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

All Saints Clifton sustains an excellent learning environment which is much valued by its pupils and much loved by its parent body. This inclusive, cohesive community demonstrates Christian values in action. Pupils say they value their teachers and their friends. Parents acknowledge their children are 'very accepting of everyone' and demonstrate friendship, kindness, honesty and respect. They praise the fact that 'what is really nice is the way that very soon the children know each other's names'. Relationships are exemplary with well embedded systems for praising positive behaviour. A very good example is the way pupils are encouraged to write compliment slips nominating someone to receive a values award card. These young children recognise that 'living the values' is an important way to live and know the steps needed to make things right if values such as respect are broken by 'not doing it again' and being honest. The school is seen to value the widest range of achievement and pupils feel able to make a positive contribution. They enjoy raising money for charities of their choice by hosting 'Thirsty Thursday's' and other projects, through which they experience the Christian values of service and gratitude. Their sense of global awareness is enhanced through links with a school in Malawi. Bright, prominent displays and interactive reflective areas in classrooms and around school proudly display Christian values as well as the pupils' own creative prayers. The school grounds include an outdoor

classroom. Pupils welcome the opportunity to be involved in developing outdoor quiet spaces for reflection.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

High quality prayerful and meaningful worship, with its focus on the value of the month, is at the heart of this school, inspiring the school day and permeating all school life and practice. The worship offered to pupils is excellent, greatly supporting their spiritual development. Pupils clearly enjoy worshipping together in a setting which enables them to encounter Jesus. They especially value reflecting and having the time 'to think what we should do right'. They really like going to church to worship, valuing the quiet so they can 'think about Jesus a little bit more'. This also affords the opportunity to gaze on an icon of 'Jesus holding the world and giving a blessing'. Services take place in the parish church of All Saints every half term, including important festivals in the church year, such as Candlemas as well as celebrating saints' days such as St Cecilia. The Eucharist is very much part of the regular pattern of worship, with pupils explaining the symbolism of bread and wine. Pupils enjoy being involved in worship in creative ways by singing, reading, poems and prayers. Pupils say they enjoy worship led by the rector, whether in church or in school who involves them, 'tells us stories and helps us to reflect'. They are able to make the connection between Bible stories and their own lives, such as Jesus' Feeding of the Five Thousand, encouraging them that 'Jesus kept on giving more and more'. Pupils say The Lord's Prayer regularly, explaining the importance of forgiveness is about 'words of sorry and sorrow as you've done something wrong and are thinking about it for a few minutes'. Pupils already have a voice in evaluating collective worship. They welcome having 'a thick book to write their feelings, prayers and thoughts down'. Governors too, recognise the importance of evaluating worship involving the pupils by reading their contributions so worship is always improving in integrity and quality.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons in this school where RE has a high profile and is well led and supported. As a result, excellence and enjoyment is seen in RE which greatly supports pupils' spiritual development. Teaching and learning is good and standards are often higher than in other core subjects. In lessons, pupils are given opportunities to ask puzzling questions about God and life, such as 'Why did Jesus choose ordinary people?' Pupils are challenged to improve their thinking in RE. They enjoy learning about other faiths and are clear about what mosque life means for Muslims, gurdwara life for Sikhs and church life for Christians. They acknowledge the importance of Shabbat for Jews, respecting 'when Shabbat starts there is no work until the next day'. There is a systematic method of assessment with tracking in place which informs planning and demonstrates achievement. Next steps include embedding assessment in RE. The school is beginning to use 'I can' levels of attainment to support this. Many pupils show a good level of theological literacy and can articulate Christian concepts such as sacrifice, trinity and salvation as well as showing good knowledge about saints such as St Alban and St George. Pupils welcome the opportunity to ponder life's big questions in discussions with adults.

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

Here is a place where the distinctive Christian vision is clearly evident and effectively promoted by the headteacher, clergy, governors and staff so that the school's Anglican foundation is celebrated amongst the whole school community. Everyone models the school vision to ensure the development of the whole child to their fullest potential, equipping them with skills for life. Exemplary relationships show the key role Christian values play in the life of the school. Pupils have a voice through the school council. Parents find all the teachers are approachable, going 'the extra mile'. They praise the warmth and closeness of this school community, valuing the preparation for 'the jump to Middle School'. An excellent partnership exists between church, school and diocese working closely together. Pupils' work has been displayed in church and the school features in the parish magazine, 'Clifton Chronicles'. Governors have addressed areas from the last inspection and are open to new ways of taking the school forward, especially in their systematic monitoring and evaluative role. They appoint effective teachers, providing them with leadership opportunities. They have identified clear areas for development, such as visiting St Albans' Abbey for gifted and talented days. In all these ways, All Saints Clifton maintains excellence in everything.

