

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Lawrence, Church of England (VA), Junior School

Church Road
East Molesey
KT8 9DR

Diocese of Guildford

Local authority: Surrey
Date of inspection: 13/10/2011
Date of last inspection: 05/11/2008
School's unique reference number: 125179
Headteacher: Mr Damian Tucker
Inspector's name and number: Mr Andrew Rickett (NSI 201)

School context

St Lawrence is a larger than average junior school with 320 pupils from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The majority of children are from a white British heritage. The headteacher was appointed at Easter 2011. The leadership team is relatively new.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Lawrence as a Church of England school are good

St Lawrence has a well-established Christian ethos that values each child as an individual. This makes a significant difference to their personal development. The school is embarking on a review of its vision to enhance the impact of its church status and identify how explicit values can make a contribution to raising standards.

Established strengths

- The underlying strength of the Christian ethos that ensures children are at the heart of the school's mission.
- The place of prayer within the life of the school
- The commitment of the leadership and management to take forward the school's Christian character.

Focus for development

- Ensure that the new vision is embedded throughout the school community so that it makes a significant difference to the development of the whole child.
- Devise and implement procedures to monitor the impact of the vision on the personal development and learning of the pupils.
- Involve all members of the school community in the review and evaluation of the impact of the vision.

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

St Lawrence has a strong Christian character that is reflected in the everyday life of the school. One of the many qualities of St Lawrence is an ethos that allows pupils the opportunity to explore issues of faith and belief and encourages them to ask searching questions and find personal meaning. Pupils with a faith and those with none, comfortably express their views with confidence and listen with respect to those of others. This environment, which is based on valuing the individual, makes a good contribution to the high quality of relationships that exist between all members of the school community. Because of this, pupils make very good progress in their personal development. However, the school is aware that more needs to be done to challenge pupils in their learning and have recently begun a process to identify how explicit Christian values can assist in raising standards. This

is at an early stage, but the new vision and values will need to be embedded so that they make an impact on the whole child. There are many opportunities for spiritual development within the school day. For example, prayer at specific times in the day helps pupils to reflect and similarly, confident teaching encourages pupils to express their thoughts at a deeper level. Attitudes towards the school and learning are positive. Pupils speak of the happiness of their friendships and understand that teachers are there to help and support them. Parents strongly agree with this: one parent spoke of the love that exists in the relationships. Pupils have a good understanding of the Christian character of the school and also have a good awareness of other faith groups. The school promotes an understanding of other cultures and faiths as reflected in visits to a synagogue and Sikh temple.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is an integral part of the life of the school and understood by children and adults to be an important way through which the whole school community expresses its Christian ethos. For example, when talking with pupils, they say that being a church school includes praising God in acts of worship and that this is a good thing because 'we should say thank you for everything we have'. Collective worship is a distinct time in the school day and are clearly occasions when the school meets together to hear and learn about Jesus and the lessons He taught. Planning of collective worship is thorough with a strong focus on Christianity but also provides a good balance with the inclusion of other faiths, as well as responding to world events and following the major festivals in the Christian calendar. This gives the pupils a good range of experiences which are enhanced through the inclusion of aspects of social and emotional aspects of learning. Pupils' attitudes towards acts of worship are positive and they respond very well. For example, in the worship observed, pupils were asked to talk with a partner to share their views and they did this in a focussed and engaged way. They respond with appropriate reverence to the opportunities for reflection and prayer and are eager to respond to questions. Pupils regard prayer as an important part of being a church school and have a very mature understanding of what prayer means. For example, pupils talk about the strength that prayer brings but say that 'you really have to believe in them'. At the same time pupils explain that God hears all prayers equally 'whether you believe or not'. Questionnaires provide opportunities for pupils to feed back their views on collective worship and these are used effectively to inform how acts of worship can be improved. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of achievement in religious education (RE) are above national expectations when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 and compare favourably with other core subjects. The lessons observed during the inspection confirmed that pupils enter the school with above average attainment in RE. The school has identified the need to raise standards in RE further, with pupils making greater progress across the Key Stage, particularly amongst the more able. The school is well-placed to develop this because teaching in RE is consistently good, planning is secure and assessment of pupil progress is becoming more confident and accurate. Assessment procedures have improved since the previous inspection. The successful development of assessment tasks, with greater focus on the pupils' understanding of what they learn from their studies, has enabled teachers to enhance their own understanding of how to level the pupils' progress accurately. The school has correctly identified that this now needs to be further developed so that teachers can confidently assess pupil attainment at the higher levels. Where teaching is at its best, it challenges the pupils' understanding and models for them how to take their learning forward. For example, in one lesson observed, the teacher showed the children how they could ask more in-depth questions and this made a real difference to the quality of the discussion which was then demonstrated in a 'hot seating' session. In another lesson with younger children, the teacher explored the characteristics of God through the words of psalms and although it demanded a high level of engagement, pupils responded very well and achieved some good quality learning. These are examples of the confidence with which teachers approach the lessons and of a clear focus on the development of pupil skills. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards RE and regard the subject as an important aspect of being a church school. The school ensures that RE is given an appropriate place within the school curriculum and that there is a good balance between the teaching of Christianity and other world faiths. The school meets the statutory requirements for religious education.

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

Since appointment in April 2011, the headteacher has begun a process of revisiting the school's Christian vision and identifying how it can be taken forward, whilst building on the existing strengths. The headteacher has a clear grasp of how to lead the whole school community in making its ethos more explicit through Christian values. He is committed and passionate about the development of the school as a church school. However, the process is at an early stage but has the full support of the governors who have a good grasp of how to implement a new vision successfully. Therefore the judgement at this stage is that leadership and management is satisfactory.

The headteacher is supported by key members of staff and together this makes a strong team. The leadership and management have correctly identified the need to embed the new vision, which includes identifying how to monitor its impact effectively on the whole child and continually evaluate the vision. The leadership and management have an accurate view of self-evaluation. These aspects together mean that there is good capacity to continue to take the school forward.

Links with the local church are good. Children and their parents regard the church as an integral part of the life of the school and say that they value the opportunities to celebrate the major Christian festivals in the church. Parents explain that the 'celebratory' style of the services in the church adds an 'an extra dimension' to their children's lives. The vicar is relatively new to post and is keen to explore his role within the life of the school, particularly regarding the pastoral support that he can give. The RE coordinator has a very good understanding of the contribution RE makes to the curriculum and the way that it complements the promotion of the Christian ethos through its links with collective worship. She ensures that RE has a high profile and has accurately identified priorities to take the subject forward. She makes a significant contribution to the promotion of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Parents feel that the school has the right balance between promoting its distinct Christian character and serving the needs of the community. They agree that the school's approach to its church status makes Christianity relevant to their children. One parent expressed this by saying that the school 'teaches their children to understand how to be thankful' for all that they have. The school is at an exciting time in its development and has the confidence and commitment to continue to develop the impact of its Christian ethos on the lives of all those in the school community.

SIAS report October 2011 St Lawrence (VA) CE Junior School, East Molesey KT8 9DR