

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Birchington Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Birchington

Kent

Diocese of Canterbury

Kent LEA

Inspected on 27 and 28 March 2006

Last inspected on November 2000

School Number: 118693

Headteacher: Mrs Janet Monkhouse (Acting)

Inspector: Mrs Virginia Corbyn

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Birchington Church of England Primary School is a satisfactory Church school.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Birchington Church of England primary school is situated to the east of Margate on the isle of Thanet. It has 410 pupils on roll who are drawn from a wide variety of social backgrounds with a small number from Church families. A third of the pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities which is well above average. Most pupils are from White British families with a small representation from several minority ethnic groups. A recent OfSTED inspection found that standards in Year 2 are average and in Year 6, standards are below average. The report also stated that the school provided good pastoral care and promoted pupils' personal development and well-being very well. An Acting headteacher has been in post since September 2005.

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- The relationships throughout the school which are characterised by mutual care and concern for the personal well-being of each individual.
- The clear planning and organisation of worship which results in a consistency of worship of a good standard across both Key Stages and whole school worship.
- The school's commitment to affirming its distinctive Christian character.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- The embedding of Christian values and opportunities for spiritual development into the school's policies and practices, and the monitoring of their effectiveness and impact.
- Ensuring that every act of worship enables pupils to understand the relevance of the Christian content in their everyday lives.
- The involvement of all stakeholders in the ownership of the school's Christian vision.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? SATISFACTORY

There are good relationships throughout the school community. Pupils and staff spoke warmly about this as a strength of their school. Positive re-enforcement of pupils meeting high expectations of behaviour result in a sense of mutual respect within the school. Those falling short of these standards are dealt with patiently and sensitively. Pupils know which adults are available to help them when they have particular problems of concerns. Older pupils are given the opportunity to become play buddies and to take responsibility for the care and welfare of younger pupils. Support for charities and good causes extend this care and concern beyond the confines of the school. The successes of individuals and of groups of children are celebrated and the pupils spoke enthusiastically about such occasions. There is, however, an awareness in the school that the links to Christian values need to be made more explicit within the policies and therefore the practices of the school in order to embed the school's distinctiveness in terms of its Christian character. Awareness that the school is a community which values each member as an important individual because they are important in the sight of God is beginning to be raised as a key factor in reviewing documentation and this needs to continue. The school also recognises that the reinforcement of a shared understanding and practical focus upon spiritual development is an area to be further developed in order to support the focus upon Christian values and principles. Parents felt that the

church status of the school was an added bonus rather than a factor which informed the way in which the school operated and some would have liked it to have a higher profile.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community? GOOD

The children spoke with animation and enjoyment about their experiences of worship in the school particularly about the opportunities which they were given to participate and the way in which their achievements were valued and celebrated. Acts of worship are well planned around the Christian themes suggested in Diocesan guidance. The material is carefully adapted to suit the age group of those present at each act of worship. The pupils are able to articulate clearly what they have seen and heard. They sing with enthusiasm and are eager to answer questions and offer ideas. The worship co-ordinator has worked hard since her appointment last summer to ensure that the planning is concise but clear and helpful for the many staff who lead worship. A helpful addition to this would be an indication of how the Christian content relates to and might influence the pupils' own lives. The requests put into the school prayer boxes are fed back into worship which pupils felt was an important way of acknowledging their concerns. Worship in the church is valued by the pupils and the parents who spoke of these occasions as memorable highlights of school life. It would be possible to build on this enthusiasm by providing more opportunities for parents to share in school-based worship which would also be a means of re-enforcing the church school profile. The children also spoke about learning a 'new' version of the Lord's prayer – the use of more Anglican liturgy would further contribute to the pupils' understanding of the practice of the local church with which the school has good links.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church school? SATISFACTORY

Under the leadership of the Acting Headteacher, Senior Managers, staff and Governors have worked together with a sense of commitment and purpose in order to evaluate the school's effectiveness as a church school. They have identified the strengths and areas for development as a whole team and have established realistic and manageable targets which, if carried out, will ensure that the distinctive Christian character of the school becomes embedded within its policies and practices. It is important that the steps taken to achieve this aim continue to be shared and owned by all members of the school community, including parents and children, so that there will be the desired impact upon the pupils in the school. It has been acknowledged that opportunities for spiritual development within worship, RE and throughout the curriculum should be maximised through staff training. This should then be followed through using the self evaluation process on a regular basis. The valuable contribution of the School Council should continue to be included in this as has been the case so far. The school continues to encourage links with the church to grow – the incumbent is a regular visitor to the school and particularly values his pastoral role within the school community. Others from the church are also regular contributors to worship and the pupils spoke enthusiastically about these visitors. Those who lead and manage the school should continue to develop their vision for the school which has the potential to enhance and enrich the experiences of the whole school community.

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