

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### Fordcombe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Fordcombe Green  
TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Kent  
TN3 0RY

**Diocese: Rochester**

LA: Kent

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006

Date of last inspection: 2000

School's Unique reference number: 118719

Headteacher: Mr Robin Dungate

Inspector's name and number: Ms Jan Thompson (NS 92)

#### School context

Fordcombe Church of England Primary School is an attractive Voluntary Aided school, situated on the village green of Fordcombe near Tunbridge Wells. It has recently benefited from an extension to its Victorian building and an increase to four classes. At a time of falling rolls, this school is full with 103 pupils. They are drawn from the village and surrounding areas, and are nearly all White British from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Pupils' have broadly average attainment on entry, and leave with high standards from Year 6. About half of all pupils are from Church families.

#### Summary Judgement

Fordcombe Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School is a good church school with many outstanding qualities. It has the capacity and the will to become an outstanding church school.

GRADE 2: GOOD

#### Established strengths

- Christian values are deeply embedded in all aspects of the school.
- Worship is central to the life of the school and has a positive impact on all those involved.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about Religious Education and have good knowledge and understanding, particularly of Christianity.
- The Headteacher is an excellent Christian leader of this school.

#### Focus for development

- The school's stated aims need to reflect the Christian purpose of the school.
- The Rector should be on the rota for daily collective worship, and thereby reinforce the Anglican aspects of school worship.
- The Religious Education subject leader needs regular in-service-training to keep up to date with developments in the subject.
- The governing body, in conjunction with the Rector, should consider establishing a School Eucharist.

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

Grade 1: OUTSTANDING.

Fordcombe Church of England Primary School succeeds in its intention of providing a stimulating and secure Christian environment. It is a very happy, caring Christian community, where relationships at all levels are excellent and pupils thrive. It has doubled in size over the past five years, but retained its family atmosphere in which each individual is valued. The Christian ethos permeates all levels of school life. For example, pupils were able to explain the Christian motivation behind their numerous charitable and environmental projects. The spirituality in the school is almost tangible, particularly in worship; and pupils show an understanding and appreciation of the role of prayer in their lives. Advantage has been taken of the new entrance hall to display the school's Christian badge; and a symbolic banner, made two years ago for the Diocese's 1400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is used to good effect in the hall for worship.

**What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?**

Grade 1: OUTSTANDING

Christian worship is appropriately central to the life of this school. It takes place three times a day in school and on major Christian festivals in the church, including St. Peter's Day (the patronal festival of the parish church). All teachers and pupils participate in school worship daily. The setting, the format and the content are all carefully planned and prepared, with the result that worship is of a very high quality. It succeeds in engaging pupils of all ages and gives them clear Christian teaching and guidance in their lives. It provides opportunities for quiet reflection and helps pupils to pray. Pupils particularly appreciate the use of a prayer-box at morning worship, for their own prayer-requests. They say it is helpful to know that other people are praying for their concerns. The Anglican nature of worship could be strengthened for all pupils if the Rector regularly contributed to the school's daily Collective Worship. This strong Church school has not yet considered having a school Eucharist.

**How effective is the religious education?**

Grade 2: GOOD

The Rochester Syllabus for Religious Education (2001) is well implemented and gives a sound basis for pupils' curriculum religious education. Pupils make good progress throughout school and achieve above average standards, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and their use of Christian vocabulary. They also know about other religions, and are able to compare these with Christianity. Pupils respond very well in lessons and speak enthusiastically of their enjoyment of the subject, rating it alongside the core subjects of English and Maths. Teaching is good, with some imaginative and effective methods. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of the level descriptions in planning their lessons and for setting more challenging work for higher ability pupils. The subject leader monitors RE through sampling pupils' books and observing lessons; but she has not honed her skills through in-service training nor kept up to date with developments in the subject.

**How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?**

Grade 1: OUTSTANDING.

The governors, including the headteacher and incumbent, are all highly committed to this school's Christian character. Under the tireless leadership of the headteacher, they have worked together, with staff, to promote this and make it effective. It is a pity, therefore, that the school's stated aims do not reflect this. Parents, however, both church-goers and others, are very aware that this is a Christian school, and very appreciative of it. The school now has in place secure processes for its self-evaluation as a church school, linked to the school improvement plan; and the leadership and management have the vision and commitment to improve further. There is a very strong and active partnership with the parish church and village community, including such things as the choir entertaining the Over-60s club in the village hall, and pupils running stalls at the church garden-party. Between 40 and 50 per cent of pupils (not all from Church families), with some staff, take part each month in an all-age Sunday service at St. Peter's Church in the village. The headteacher regularly rehearses pupils for this and attends personally, although he lives a considerable distance from the school. He has also initiated an adult prayer-group for the school. The church nature of the school is also strengthened by its links with the Diocese: for instance, it regularly takes part in the Diocesan Church Schools Festival. Links with the Anglican Church worldwide have been established with Uganda through a Rochester Diocesan scheme.