

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Archbishop Courtenay Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

College Road

Maidstone

Kent

ME15 6YH

**Diocese: Canterbury**

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 18/19 July 2007

School's unique reference number: 134921

Headteacher: Mrs Marian Brooks

Inspector's name and number: Rev Derek Bastide 418

#### **School context**

Archbishop Courtenay is a new aided school, formed in 2005 from a merger of two Church of England controlled schools, All Saints' CE Primary and St Stephen's CE Infants. It operates on two sites over a mile apart with Foundation and Key Stage 1 pupils in the former St Stephen's site at Tovil and Key Stage 2 pupils on the former All Saints' site in the town centre. There are 188 pupils on roll. Most of the pupils come from a White British background, although there is an increasing number both of pupils who follow religions other than Christianity and also of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and of those eligible for free school meals are both well above the national average. Only a very small percentage of the pupils come from church going families.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Archbishop Courtenay as a Church of England school are good**

##### **Established strengths**

- The strength of the relationship between the school and the church
- The commitment to meeting the emotional needs of pupils
- The central place of the Eucharist in the life of the school

##### **Focus for development**

- Involve pupils more in the formal evaluation of collective worship
- Consider possible ways of developing a stronger Anglican ethos in daily collective worship
- Identify ways of extending the monitoring and assessment of Religious Education

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

The school's values are rooted in the Christian faith and they are reflected both in school policies and in the ways in which the school is run. Achievements of all kinds, for example, are valued and celebrated. These values are largely shared by the whole school community. Relationships at all levels are good. Pupils say there is little bullying, but if it should occur they know what to do. Pupils enjoy attending school and feel both safe and valued. Pupils' emotional needs are supported especially by the school's Children's Liaison Officer and Families' Liaison Officer. Parents, pupils and teachers spoke of the loving and Christian atmosphere of the school in which all receive so much support, especially in times of difficulty. This Christian atmosphere is reflected in tangible form in the many Christian symbols and displays around the school. Spiritual and moral development are good. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate the wonder and beauty of the world and to reflect upon it. Circle time and PSHE are important areas in the school curriculum and they provide clear opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Worship occupies an important place in the life of the school, whether it be the daily collective worship, the classroom prayers or the celebration of the Eucharist. Collective worship is supported by a good policy and is based week by week on appropriate themes. Individual acts of worship are well planned and normally include a story, often drawn from the Bible, the singing of hymns or songs, prayers including the school prayer which has been set to music and opportunities for reflection. There is considerable pupil involvement. Pupils also join enthusiastically in the prayers and sing powerfully. Staff normally attend both acts of collective worship and the school Eucharist. Because of the two sites, acts of worship are almost all key stage specific. Pupils certainly enjoy collective worship but a number of comments made suggest that it goes deeper than this and is actually feeding the spirit: 'I learned something about being afraid is not good. If we always pray, God will be nearer to us than the fear' and 'It (ie collective worship) told me what to do when I was worried about anything.' The Eucharist is very significant in school worship. In Key Stage 2 it is celebrated about twelve times a year, rather less often in Key Stage 1. Pupils have made up their own service booklet and play an active part as both readers and intercessors. In the splendid setting of All Saints' Church, the service observed was both awe inspiring and intimate. Although the Eucharist is thoroughly Anglican, collective worship currently lacks a distinctively Anglican flavour so it would be valuable for the school to give some thought to this. Collective worship is evaluated within the school but a formal response from pupils is at any early stage of development. Parents are invited to all school services in the church.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory**

Religious Education (RE) is regarded by all stakeholders as being of central importance in the school. Consequently RE has the status of a core subject with the appropriate allocation of curriculum time and with a generous resource allocation this year to facilitate the introduction of the new RE syllabus. RE has good features and is developing well. The subject leader has identified a staff need for additional subject input especially for faiths other than Christianity and in-service support has been organised for next term. Godly Play has been introduced and, as it has proved successful, is to be extended to a broader range of pupils. Lessons observed were good with a lively response from pupils. Recorded work seen was well pitched to the age and stage of the pupils and the standards achieved were similarly appropriate. Pupils enjoy RE and have a good understanding of the work undertaken. Although RE is monitored by the RE governor and there been some scrutiny from outside, there is currently little provision for regular monitoring within the school. There are plans to introduce a levelling approach to the assessment of RE in the school.

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

The headteacher and governors provide a very high level of leadership of a Church school. The headteacher is both inspirational and hard working with a very strong personal vision of the role of the school as a church school. All stakeholder groups talk of the way in which the headteacher has transformed the school as a Church school. This vision is shared by the governors and supported by all the staff. The school's self evaluation is both thoughtful and perceptive and also accurate and effective. The headteacher and governors see the school as an essential part of the mission of the church in the area. There is a very close relationship with the parish church. The Vicar is frequently in the school; the assistant priest teaches in the school each week developing Godly Play. The headteacher together with the previous curate established Sunday evening services on the Tovil site in a part of the parish distant from any church. Members of the parish assist in the school and are generous in their financial support for needs in the school. There are good relations with other churches in the area and the Baptist minister is a governor and also takes his place along with the Vicar and assistant priest on the collective worship rota. Governors, parents, pupils and parishioners are very proud of their school.