

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Bishop Ridley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Northumberland Avenue,
Welling
DA16 2QE

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Bexley LA

Dates of inspection: 9th March 2009

School's unique reference number: 134780

Headteacher: Mr. Steven Hall

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

School context

Bishop Ridley is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School that opened in September 2004 as a church school. It is a large school of 323 pupils, mostly White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is a little above average, with the largest group from Black African backgrounds. About 20% of pupils enter from church backgrounds and this figure doubles when taking into account the pupils who regularly attend the monthly Sunday parade service in church. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is less than half the national average. Pupils make good progress in school and leave with above average standards. Ofsted judged the school to be good.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Bishop Ridley as a Church of England school are good

Bishop Ridley Church of England Primary School in Falconwood continues to be a good Church school.

Established strengths

- The strong Christian spiritual and moral development of pupils.
- The impact of Collective Worship on pupils in the school.
- The strong Christian leadership of the head teacher, well supported by the Governing Body and the links with the church.

Focus for development

- The Governing Body should take a more strategic role in monitoring, evaluating and improving the church aspects of the school.
- They should identify the distinctive Christian values of the school.
- They should promote more Anglican aspects of worship.
- The Religious Education (RE) subject leader should keep up to date with training.

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

Bishop Ridley is a happy, friendly, well-organised school where pupils are well cared for and achieve well. Relationships are good and pupils behave exceptionally well. Parents associate the school's kind and caring ethos with its Christian values and say that their children develop a more thoughtful approach to life because it is a church school. Pupils respond very well to the strong Christian moral and spiritual teaching which is evident particularly in RE and worship, where teaching is related to pupils' own lives. For example, the inspection took place during Lent, which pupils were encouraged to keep in some way. Pupils were able to relate the choices that Jesus made in the wilderness to their own choices between right and wrong. The school is preparing pupils very well to become responsible citizens by encouraging an ethos of respect for others. Pupils are enthusiastic in raising money for charities and helping in the community, and even the younger ones could explain that this is

a way of following Jesus and is associated with praying for people in need. The school has improved the use of its environment for spiritual development and has more plans for development. Year 6 pupils valued the opportunity to make prayer-flags for the spiritual garden; and there are good Christian displays in the classrooms. However, their use by pupils is not yet fully developed and the hall environment is not very conducive to worship.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

In many ways, Christian worship is very important in this school. It is well organised by the headteacher, who leads much of the daily worship, and each day begins and ends with prayer. However, it is not monitored and evaluated, with pupil involvement, in order to improve it. Pupils were able to explain the value of prayers to them, especially at the end of each day. Daily Collective Worship is based on the Church's Year, with a lot of teaching from the Bible. Consequently, pupils gain a very good knowledge of the Bible and Christianity, and were able to explain the Festival of Pentecost. The quality of worship is good. Pupils behave very well, entering and leaving in silence and listening quietly to the music at the beginning and end. They say that they enjoy singing the Christian songs and having time for prayer and thinking about God. Collective Worship is beginning to develop pupils' understanding of Anglican faith and practice, which is supported by their worship in the parish church and by introducing Year 6 to Holy Communion. However, the Vicar currently only leads special acts of worship rather than being involved on a weekly basis in the school's Collective Worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is a popular subject and pupils behave very well in class. They value learning about different religions; older pupils were able to explain that this helped them to understand other people and not cause offence unwittingly. Steady progress is recorded in RE across the school, with pupils reaching standards in line with national expectations or above. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of Christianity especially, and they are also well taught about other religions. Their recorded work in their books does not always reflect their higher abilities that are demonstrated in oral work in class, where they were seen to apply what they learnt about religion to their own lives, to suggest meanings for religious symbols and to wrestle with some deep theological explanations. Teachers are not making sufficient use of the level descriptions in setting work, with too much written work simply recording facts about religions. Marking does not help pupils to move on to higher levels. The scheme of work being used creates a good balance between the religious content and pupils' personal development and this makes a good contribution to their moral and spiritual development. The RE subject leader has monitored the subject and introduced some of the new Diocesan syllabus, but has not attended any RE training since the last inspection.

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

There is much to celebrate in the development of this church school. The head teacher provides good Christian leadership and is well supported in this by the Governing Body and the Vicar. There is a very strong partnership between school and church, which is beneficial to both. The school has continued to establish itself locally as a new church school, so that some parents are now choosing it because of its Christian nature. The relationship between school and church has become embedded, so that pupils now see the church as their church. Teachers who joined the school as a community school give good support to its Christian ethos. However, the Governing Body has not taken any strategic control of the school's self-evaluation process as a church school, leaving it almost entirely to the head teacher. Advice from the Diocese about involving parents and pupils in this process has only just begun to be followed. The aims of the school make good reference to Christianity but do not specifically identify the Christian values that define its ethos.