

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Boutcher Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

93, Grange Road,
Bermondsey,
London,
SE1 3BW.

Diocese: Southwark

School's Unique reference number: 100822

Date of inspection: 20th June 2008

Date of last inspection: June 2004

Headteacher: Mrs J Marwood

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number: Mrs P Draycott (161)

School context

Boutcher is a small, over-subscribed school serving a culturally and socially diverse area. Most pupils come from Christian backgrounds with a small number from other faith backgrounds also represented. Pupils in the main come from White British or Black African backgrounds. Half speak English as an additional language. There is a higher than average number with a Statement of Special Educational Need.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Boutcher Church of England Primary School is outstanding

Christian values provide a solid foundation and pervade every aspect of Boutcher's life and work. It is an extremely happy and joyful place where pupils are exceptionally well supported personally and spiritually, based on Christian principles. This Christian care enables them to thrive and succeed.

Established strengths

- the clear Christian ethos and values evident in all aspects of the school's life, capably led by a highly committed headteacher and extremely well supported by teaching and non-teaching staff alike
- the outstanding spiritual and moral development of pupils
- the effective worship opportunities provided throughout the school for all pupils and for staff
- the good progress made in developing further the religious education (RE) curriculum since the previous denominational inspection

Focus for development

- further planning and support for teachers in RE to ensure that all pupils, and especially the most able, build effectively on their high levels of knowledge and understanding

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

The school has an extremely strong and positive Christian ethos that recognises and fosters the God given talents of all its pupils. Relationships are exemplary and there is an exceptional sense of belonging, commitment and pride in the school from pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors. This is based on a shared understanding of the fact that this is a church school serving the needs of all its pupils and their families. Pupils speak particularly positively of being valued and cared for. Boutcher is a school where every child matters as a child of God and where pupils both enjoy and achieve. The school sees it as its Christian responsibility to help all children to succeed. To quote a parent, 'the school wants all the children to do their best and they get the best out of all the children too'. Consequently it effectively tracks pupils' attainment in order to address individual learning needs and enable all to achieve their best. This means that at the end of Year 6 attainment is higher than average in English, maths and science when many entered the school with lower than expected skills. This shows that they achieve outstandingly well academically and personally.

Pupils are very proud to be part of this church school community and recognise that faith in God is important in daily life. Their spiritual and moral development is outstanding. They show maturity in understanding issues of spiritual and moral concern. One child said, 'We don't only think about God in assembly but all the time. God helps us in everything we do – that's what we learn at school'. They speak of being treated respectfully by staff and how they should treat each other respectfully because Jesus wants them to. The small numbers of members of other religious backgrounds in the school feel included and valued. The school environment is effectively used to encourage spiritual development through, for example, RE displays around the school and in each classroom. There is a prayer station which includes a candle and a prayer book in each class. The main hall is adorned with banners and other art work, made by the pupils, in cross year groups based on themes from the worship programme. The school is well aware of the importance of the environment in promoting spiritual development and is considering developing a reflection area in the school grounds as well.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is rightly seen as central to the school's life by the headteacher and governors, by staff, pupils and their parents or carers. Consequently a very real priority is given to providing high quality acts of worship that are relevant and engage those present. The quality and effectiveness of the worship programme is appropriately monitored by the headteacher and RE co-ordinator who also has some responsibility for the worship programme. The parish priest reports annually to the governing body about the worship life of the school.

Worship is extremely well planned around a range of themes that are suitably linked with RE and issues in the wider world. Currently the school does not highlight in its planning the links with and contribution that worship makes to other areas of the school curriculum. There is a very well-established pattern of special services such as for Harvest, Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Some are held in school and others in the parish church. Leavers attend a special service in the Cathedral. These services appropriately extend the range and quality of worship pupils experience. Worship draws effectively on Anglican and other Christian forms of expression. For example, pupils know the Lord's prayer and other prayers said at Holy Communion and they are familiar with a number of prayers that are based around versicles and responses. Regular attendance at Holy Communion and the Admission to Communion before Confirmation classes support pupils in developing their understanding of and response to the Eucharist. Children from other faith backgrounds take part in worship appropriately and feel included.

Pupils are extremely responsive and attentive during worship. Behaviour is outstanding and they are eager to participate through singing, reading, saying prayers, acting out, answering questions and offering their opinions. In an outstandingly good Holy Communion service for Key Stage 2 pupils, Year 5 led a dramatic presentation of the story of St Paul's conversion and other pupils took part by reading class prayers. The singing was tuneful and enhanced the worship considerably. One child said, 'You can feel God when we pray together and when we are quiet and think' and another added, 'I like to sing hymns because it makes me know God better'. Another said, 'when we light a candle in class it sort of makes you feel warm inside and you remember Jesus is the light of the world.' Year 6 enjoy taking responsibility for preparing the hall for worship and see it as an important job to do.

Religious Education is good

Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in developing the RE curriculum. RE is very important in the life of the school. This is shown by the way it is closely linked with the worship programme, which in itself has a high priority in school life, and by the way the headteacher and governors support the subject through resources, monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. Since taking over responsibility the RE co-ordinator has worked effectively with the headteacher to develop content and approaches further. She has also worked well with teaching staff in supporting their knowledge and understanding of RE. The RE curriculum is well organised around the worship themes with the content being mainly and explicitly Christian, with appropriate links made to other religions. Teacher medium- and short-term planning is improving but learning intentions are not sufficiently matched to the levels that should be expected of pupils in order to support and challenge them consistently well. Some helpful work has been done to improve assessment but this is not yet sufficiently refined so that expectations are matched to pupils.

Standards in RE are high. Overall pupils are working at least at the level expected for their age and many are working beyond it. For example in a good Year 1 lesson seen pupils spoke confidently and with insight into various aspects of the story of Moses taking the people out of Egypt and about the way in which Jewish people celebrate Pesach (Passover) today. Whilst most pupils are achieving appropriately, a few, especially the most able, are not being sufficiently challenged by tasks that extend rather than consolidate their learning. This is due mainly to a few too many tasks being set that reinforce learning rather than taking it forward and challenging the pupils to apply their learning and use their skills in new situations.

Pupils have a very positive attitude to RE, they enjoy learning about Christianity and other religions and see RE as an important subject. They enjoy having a range of things to do in RE. One child said, 'We don't only do writing, we do drawings and make things and do drama and have lots of discussions – that makes it interesting'. The RE co-ordinator has introduced 'Godly play' as one way to extend the range of teaching and learning strategies used in RE. Pupils enjoy this strategy and say that it helps them think about the story they are addressing in new ways.

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is underpinned by the clear vision she has for her church school. She works very effectively and collaboratively with her deputies, the governors, other staff, the pupils and their families and the local Christian community to bring it about. The school is highly regarded within the local community. The Christian vision for the school is evident throughout – in its documentation, in the building through for example its signs and symbols, in the exemplary quality of relationships and in the highly effective pastoral and spiritual links between the school and the parish church. There is a strong and highly effective working relationship between the parish clergy and clergy from other churches and the school which particularly impacts on the high quality of worship and on the underpinning ethos and values of the school. The school's Christian character is made clear through recruitment and induction procedures for new staff. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations well and provide the headteacher with valuable encouragement and support.

Effective use has been made of the previous inspection report to guide developments and the process of self-evaluation is well embedded in school practice. The headteacher's inclusive approach ensures that all members of the school community are involved in the future direction of the school. Observations, discussions and questionnaires provide sources of information to help guide developments. Parents play an active part in the life of the school and their views are taken into account. They appreciate the willingness of the headteacher, staff and governors to listen to them and to offer support.