

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **Christ Church, Erith, Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Lesney Park Road,  
Erith,  
Kent  
DA8 3DG

#### **Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Bexley

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> December 2006

School's unique reference number: 134358

Headteacher: Mrs. Beverley Gardner

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

#### **School context**

Christ Church, Erith, is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School that opened in September 2003 in the building of the former Lesney Park Primary School. It is a larger than average primary school, with 292 pupils, including 46 children in its nursery. Although it opened as a Church school three years ago, its admissions criteria, giving preference to children from Church backgrounds, has only come into effect in the last two years. Consequently Christians are still in a small minority through most of the school, but about a third of pupils in Years R and 1 are affiliated to the Church. Few other religions are represented in the school, even though they are also given preference in the admissions criteria. Sixty percent of pupils are White British. The biggest minority ethnic group is Black African, making up 18 percent. About 40 per cent of pupils are from socially deprived backgrounds. The school's recent Ofsted report judged the school to be an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church, Erith as a Church of England school are good**

Christ Church, Erith, Church of England Primary School is a good and improving new Church school.

#### **Established strengths**

- The school's strong focus on Christian education and pupils' spiritual development.
- The good quality Collective Worship and its importance in the school.
- The very competent subject leadership of Religious Education.
- The strong Christian leadership of the Head Teacher, well supported by the Governing Body.

#### **Focus for development**

- Develop more Anglican aspects of worship.
- Monitor Collective Worship through a link governor who will report back to the Governing Body.
- Establish consistency in good teaching and learning in all Religious Education lessons.
- Develop a Vision Statement and aims suitable for a Church School.

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

Christ Church, Erith, is a happy school where pupils are well cared for and where parents know that their children will get help with their individual needs. Consequently pupils like school and enjoy their work. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is very well supported by Collective Worship and Religious Education. For example, even Year 1/2 pupils speak of Christmas in terms of 'hope', 'peace' and 'love'. A Year 4 pupil, writing about her feelings when gazing on a candle, wrote 'The candle is in my heart. When it burns, joy and peace burst out with excitement.' The school environment is very well used to encourage spiritual development, from crosses strategically placed throughout the school to attractive Christmas displays in the hall, which all tell different parts of the Nativity Story. Of particular note are the

prayer-shelves in each classroom that are used daily for class prayers. Relationships in school are good at all levels. Teachers manage class behaviour well and pupils work well together. They regularly pray to be 'respectful and forgiving, responsible and honest, supporting and encouraging' of each other (the School Prayer) and these qualities are in evidence throughout the school.

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

Christian worship is very important in this school and each day begins and ends with prayer. Daily Collective Worship always has the whole school gathered together with a lot of input from the Head Teacher and with all teachers attending. This has raised its status in the school. The Head Teacher co-ordinates Collective Worship very well, using it to develop pupils' Christian education, particularly their knowledge of the Bible. The quality of worship is good. Pupils behave very well, entering and leaving in silence and listening quietly to the music at the beginning. They enjoy singing the Christian songs and carols, which are well accompanied by the Head Teacher on the piano or guitar. Some older pupils were unable to explain the main purpose of worship, but others understood it well in terms of forgiveness and 'Getting to know God and Jesus better'. Collective Worship is beginning to develop pupils' understanding of Anglican faith and practice, which is supported by the Vicar or another member of the church ministry team who leads the worship once a fortnight. Although the Governing Body is involved, it has not appointed a link-governor for the school's worship and is not fulfilling its role in monitoring it.

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

Standards of attainment in Religious Education (RE) are generally in line with the national expectations used by the syllabus, although there is some inconsistency between classes. Key Stage 1 is better than Key Stage 2 because it has a higher percentage of pupils from Christian backgrounds. Progress year on year is illustrated with fuller explanations and more developed ideas. Not enough time is given to curriculum RE and insufficient work is recorded in most Key Stage 2 classes, although discussion is often good. Teaching and learning is at least satisfactory and often good, supported by a well-structured scheme of work that gives a good balance to knowledge and understanding of religions and also how it relates to pupils' own lives. This scheme has been carefully developed and adapted by the subject leader to the complex pattern of mixed-age classes. Assessment is well developed, in line with whole-school policy, but the use of the national level descriptions is not yet making enough difference when teachers plan RE work for different abilities.

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

The Head Teacher and Foundation Governors actively promote the Christian aspects of the school, but they haven't yet developed a clear and distinctive enough vision for the school as a church school. Consequently it is not well explained to parents in school literature. The reason for this is that the emphasis was on inclusion rather than distinctiveness when the school first started, in order to accommodate the existing staff and pupils. The school now has a new head teacher, mostly newly appointed staff, and some families now choosing the school because of its church status. There is now a desire to be clearer about the difference that a Christian education makes, as well as continuing to be welcoming and inclusive of all. The self-evaluation of the school's church aspects has been taken seriously and has resulted in improvements in all areas of the Christian life of the school. A small church-school working party has been the driving force behind this, made up of some Foundation Governors and members of the Senior Leadership Team. Consequently the school has a good knowledge of itself and where it needs to improve. There is a very strong and developing partnership between the parish church of Christ Church and the school which took its name. The Vicar is the chairman of Governors and five Foundation Governors are members of the Parochial Church Council. They give very good support to the school both in time, prayer and financial support. The school also makes good use of Diocesan support.