

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,

Perry Vale,
Forest Hill,
London
SE23 2NE.

Southwark Diocese

LA: Lewisham

Dates of inspection: 16th November 2006

Date of last inspection: July 2002

School's Unique reference number: 100721

Name of Headteacher: Mr Michael Larkin

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

School Context

Christ Church is a one form entry primary school that serves a socially and ethnically diverse inner city community. Many pupils come from Black Caribbean or Black African backgrounds with a substantial minority of children from Asian backgrounds. A few children come from practising Christian backgrounds. Around a third of pupils speak English as an additional language and just under half have some sort of special educational need. The headteacher came to the school in September 2006. The school has faced significant and serious staffing difficulties over the last year or so which are now being resolved.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church as a Church of England school are satisfactory

Christ Church is a satisfactory Church of England school, with rising standards and a purposeful vision and plan for further improvement based on the learning and personal needs of all its pupils. Its Christian identity in serving its local community is increasingly being made explicit in its life and work and pupils are beginning to respond very well to this.

Established Strengths

- the very good links with the clergy of the parish in supporting and developing the school's ethos;
- the good response of pupils to RE (Religious Education) activities and the worship opportunities provided.

Focus for Development

- implement the identified plan to improve standards and develop the Christian ethos of the school;
- improve standards in RE by providing tasks suitably matched to the learning needs of all pupils and based on the newly introduced school teaching for learning policy;
- establish strategies for assessing pupils' work in RE.

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

The school through its distinctive Christian character is now satisfactory at meeting the needs of all learners. There has been a recent but very real impetus on endeavouring to help all pupils succeed both in their academic work and improve their behaviour and attitudes. Pupils respond well to the re-emphasis that there now is on the Christian underpinning of the school's life and work. They know that they are part of a church school. However, pupils do not as yet speak of wanting to learn and do their best although they do recognise that 'things are improving' to quote a member of the school council. The school mission statement makes clear the important messages of love and care for all, honesty, forgiveness and faith in God as being central to school life. The school improvement plan rightly includes an emphasis on developing the school's Christian ethos and links that to its thrust to raise standards.

There is a satisfactory range of opportunities to focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues which pupils respond to well. A school prayer has been introduced (since September 2006) and pupils are now saying this and the Lord's Prayer regularly. Increasingly pupils are being given opportunities to see prayer as an important and normal part of the school's life. There are prayer boxes in each classroom and in the entrance hall for pupils and adults to request prayer. In RE and through worship pupils are given a range of opportunities to explore spiritual, religious and moral issues and to reflect on the implications for every day life. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and like the newly introduced behaviour systems because what is expected is clear and fair.

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

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good and is increasingly central to school life. Worship is well planned and given a high priority by the incumbent, the headteacher and his staff. There is an act of worship every day supplemented by special services held in school for principal festivals such as Easter and Christmas. Children enter and leave whole school acts of worship in a quiet and dignified manner. They join in well and listen attentively to adults and children who lead worship. For example, in a very good act of worship seen Year 2 pupils acted out the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den and led prayers they had written. The rest of the school listened quietly and joined in answering questions posed by the incumbent about the relevance of the story for life today. The Friday assembly is a celebration of pupils' work and achievements and as such plays an important part in celebrating achievement and raising expectations of pupils behaviour and academic attainment. Currently this assembly lacks consistency in providing opportunities for prayer and reflection. There are firm plans in place, once some redevelopment of church property is in place to enable pupils to visit the worship centre regularly, with the plans being specifically designed to allow space for this given the fact that the church is too far from the school for regular visits.

How effective is the religious education?

The effectiveness of religious education is now satisfactory after a period when its importance was not recognised or put into practice as much as it should have been.

Standards in RE, as in other subject areas, are below what can be expected for the ages of the pupils. There is evidence that since September standards of pupils' work have begun to improve significantly. Pupils work co-operatively in RE and remain on task during lessons. Teachers are focusing on improving speaking and listening skills through RE and are asking relevant and open-ended questions based on the content of the lesson to prompt responses and develop understanding. The quality of written work is not as good as the oral responses, with evidence in books of quite a bit of unfinished work. Assessment strategies in RE focused on helping pupils know what they needed to do to improve is underdeveloped. Teachers have made a start in considering how to improve learning and teaching in RE. There is a lack of understanding with regard to how to set tasks, based on challenging RE learning outcomes to help pupils achieve appropriately.

The range of content, activities and approaches reflects the Diocesan guidelines and provides a satisfactory basic outline for RE. However, currently these have not been used or adapted closely enough to the needs of pupils in the school. The newly introduced teaching for learning policy is beginning to impact on teaching across the school and provides a useful starting point for further developments of RE.

The RE subject-leader has had her responsibility for about a year and during that time has worked in a focused manner to improve its position within the school. Good progress has been made in this. The subject improvement plan she has developed, in consultation with colleagues, is well focused and has identified key areas for improvement. She has drawn appropriately on advice and support from the Diocese. Some new Bibles, for younger pupils have been purchased and use has been made of Lewisham's Professional Centre for borrowing relevant RE resources to supplement those in school. She is aware of the need to bear in mind current developments in the school and to incorporate them as appropriate within RE. Whilst staff attitudes towards RE have improved significantly there has not been as yet focused staff meeting time to support developments.

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

Following an extended period of instability the leadership and management of the school as a church school is now satisfactory and there is very good capacity for further improvement.

The new Headteacher provides excellent leadership. Despite being in post for such a short time he has made significant impact in focusing developments on raising standards. There has been a sea-change of attitude and commitment to enhance the learning opportunities provided for pupils in this church school based on valuing individuals as children of God. The senior leadership team and governors are now focusing appropriately on how to make more explicit the Christian foundation of the school. The appointment of the new headteacher has brought about a great deal of change, some of it difficult, in a very short period of time. The governors see the necessity for this and welcome and support it, as do staff, parents and pupils. The leadership team, governors and staff are now working well together to support the headteacher in his drive to improve standards further and raise the Christian profile of the school.

The school's evaluation of itself as a church school is being focused by the use of the National Society Toolkit. The headteacher, supported by his deputy, has quickly and correctly identified the main strengths and weaknesses of the school and has taken decisive action to bring about improvements in its Christian ethos. The judgements made are accurate and provide a clear platform for further development and improvement. The findings in the Toolkit have not yet been shared more widely with governors and staff to provide a framework for further development. From September 2006 the school has made outstanding progress on the issues identified for development in the previous inspection report (2002) but progress prior to September has been inadequate.

Links between the church and the school have been satisfactory since the previous inspection but from September 2006 they are now good and improving. The Vicar and Curate are regular visitors to school both in class and in assemblies and they are committed to working with the headteacher, staff and governors to improve the experience that pupils have during their time in school. The church building is not within easy walking distance. The plans for the redevelopment of church land nearer to the school have been enlarged to accommodate visits from the school in the future. The school logo is used by the church and children's work is now regularly on display in the church signalling clearly the link within the faith community.

SIAS November 2006 Christ Church Voluntary Aided Primary School, Perry Vale, Forest Hill, London, SE2 2NE.