

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Deal Parochial Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Gladstone Road

Walmer

Deal

Kent

CT14 7ER

Diocese: Canterbury

LA: Kent

Inspected on 10-11 July 2008

Last inspected: 8th and 9th March 2004

Unique Reference Number: 118746

Headteacher: Graham Chisnell

Inspector: Derek Bastide, NS No. 418

School context

Deal Parochial Church of England Primary School serves three parishes within the town of Deal. It has 207 pupils on roll aged from 4 to 11 who are organised in seven classes. The school is housed in good modern premises (2001) with the later addition of a building housing an expressive arts studio and a library. The majority of pupils come from Church families.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of as a Church of England school are outstanding

Deal Parochial Church of England Primary School is an outstanding Church school.

Established strengths

- A very strong Christian ethos which permeates the school
- A high level of confidence in its role as a Church school
- Excellent Collective Worship

Focus for development

- Review the working of the new religious education (RE) syllabus
- Identify and arrange INSET to meet teachers' needs with reference to religious subject knowledge at their level
- Review the monitoring arrangements for RE
- Extend the programme of visits to places of worship

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

The school has a very clear and firm Christian ethos. This is based on the central conviction that all are made in the image of God and are therefore of infinite value. This is expressed in such statements as 'our relationships reflect the love of Jesus' and 'we are all gifted and talented'. The school is keen to identify the strengths and aptitudes of each pupil so that they can be developed to the utmost. A particular mark of the school is the acknowledgement and rewarding of the success of pupils in a very wide range of areas and activities. Relationships in the school are excellent. Pupils spoke very warmly of their teachers and parents talked of 'a caring school', 'a school that listens'. The pupils interviewed identified the reason why the school was such a happy place. 'Learning so much about Jesus and his teaching as we do makes us much kinder to each other.' Parents say that the vast majority of the parents share the same Christian values as the school so both school and home reinforce each other's teaching. As one parent said 'I give the school ten out of ten.' Spiritual development is very strong and genuinely permeates the broader curriculum. Spiritual issues are openly discussed by pupils and teachers alike naturally and without embarrassment.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is absolutely central to the life of the school and a crucial root of its Christian ethos. There is an excellent policy in place which lays down clear foundations. The school uses themes recommended by the diocese but customise them where appropriate. The headteacher provides background material so that class teachers can follow up the themes later in the day. All staff attend whole school acts of worship. The school has a specially designed monitoring form which is used continually. One outcome of this monitoring has been the reorganisation of the layout of the school hall for Collective Worship. This has resulted in a much more intimate atmosphere which pupils greatly prefer. Acts of worship are lively and imaginative and involve pupils in an active role. In acts of worship observed during the inspection pupils were very attentive and clearly found them absorbing. They sang hymns and worship songs enthusiastically and joined reverently in the prayers and reflection.

Parents spoke of their children singing hymns and worship songs to themselves at home. Pupils interviewed spoke very warmly of the impact of Collective Worship. As one pupil said 'We prefer it to church on Sundays because it really is church at our level as children and not mainly for grown ups.' Another, from a non church going family, added 'I am a Christian and so this is my church.' Others said that the issues raised in worship made them more thoughtful and kinder to each other. Pupils also appreciate the experience they have of an annual service in each of the three churches. As these churches have different traditions of churchmanship, pupils do have a broad experience of Anglican worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE is an important feature of the school and central to its work. It is regarded as a core subject and treated accordingly in terms of teaching time and resource materials. There is also provision for enrichment work. The school has a very experienced subject leader who is overseeing the introduction and establishment of the new RE syllabus. There is a good balance in the syllabus between the two attainment targets, learning about religion and learning from religion and between different religious traditions. One lesson observed which focused on the Bar-mitzvah (boys) and Bat-mitzvah (girls), the Jewish coming of age ceremony, illustrates this balance very well. The lesson was taught confidently. It gave a very clear picture of what is involved in the ceremony and also encouraged pupils to reflect and to discuss how their own coming of age might impact upon them. Other lessons observed tended to focus more strongly upon the second attainment target. Some teachers felt less confident about teaching the first attainment target, learning about religion, and would appreciate more input at their own level. Greater provision for monitoring the subject would be useful here. There is as yet no provision for visits to places of worship other than to Christian churches. Pupils enjoy RE. They talked of a sudden strengthening of the teaching of RE about a year ago which has made it much more fun. More active and practical methods such as drama were introduced which made it more effective. Parents echoed this too: 'They (the pupils) are always talking about what they have been doing in RE'. Pupils discuss well in class and levels of achievement are appropriate to their age and stage. Pupils' presentation of work is better orally than it is in their RE books. The assessment of RE is being developed as part of a whole school assessment policy covering all subjects.

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

The headteacher has a very clear vision of the Christian nature of the school and his charisma is a very important element in making that vision an actuality. As one parent said approvingly 'The headteacher brings God into everything' and another 'The headteacher gives a strong lead on spiritual values and the staff respect and uphold them.' Staff, whatever their background, do share this common approach. This vision is also shared by the governing body which is very aware of its responsibilities. They also contribute to the school's robust process of self evaluation. Governors are closely involved in those areas which are particular to a Church school. One governor interviewed, for example, had worked with the RE coordinator on both the RE syllabus and the policy. The whole governing body has recently reviewed its concept of what a Church school should be. As a result it has opened up its admissions policy to ensure that 10% of its places be made available to pupils who did not have a church connection. The school has very close connections with three

parish churches. All three clergy are governors, are involved in the life of the school and lead Collective Worship on a regular basis. Pupils are very aware that they belong to a Church school and are convinced that its 'Christian ethos and values are what make it the super school it is.'

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