

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Hawkhurst Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Fowlers Park

Rye Road

Hawkhurst

Kent

TN18 4JJ

Diocese: Canterbury

LA: Kent

Inspected on 29th and 30th April 2008

Last inspected: 20 October 2003

Unique Reference Number: 118602

Headteacher: Elizabeth Hatcher

Inspector: Judy Bainbridge, NS No. 328

School context

Hawkhurst is a voluntary controlled one-form entry primary school serving a large village in west Kent. The catchment area includes significant pockets of rural deprivation. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, with a relatively high proportion living in social housing. Most are White British, though 7.5% are of Romany descent. There is a higher incidence of pupil mobility than that seen nationally. The percentage of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. There have been many staff changes in the last few years. The Headteacher has been in post since September 2006, and a new Deputy joined the school in January 2008. After a period in which standards fell below the national average, the recent OfSTED report judged achievement and progress now to be satisfactory.

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

Hawkhurst Church of England Primary School is a good Church school with considerable capacity for further development.

Established strengths

- The school is a lively, caring and inclusive community, rooted in Christian values, and wholly committed to the welfare of all pupils and their families.
- Pupils engage enthusiastically in worship which is well planned and delivered.
- The strong commitment of the Headteacher, staff and governors to school improvement is firmly based on honest and constructive self-evaluation.

Focus for development

- Extend and consolidate opportunities for all stakeholders to be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship.
- Secure the attendance of all class teachers at collective worship.

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

This is an inclusive school in which everyone is valued and respected. Strong provision for the pastoral care of pupils is extended to their families, making the school what one teacher described as 'a safe haven'. Parents perceive the Headteacher and staff as always being approachable and ready to listen, acting swiftly to resolve any problems which may arise. The work of the teaching staff is supported and extended by the very effective Family Liaison Officer and by a trained worker from a Christian counselling agency. Pupils know where to go when they need help, and have instituted a 'worry box' to further assist those with problems. Pupils are also supportive of one another, with older children caring particularly well for younger ones. This sense of care is rooted in Christian beliefs and values which are made

explicit in signs, symbols and displays around the school, in the school's aims and in key documents such as the prospectus. Adults in the school speak of the way in which these beliefs and values help to create a sense of common purpose. Pupils are aware that their school is distinctive. For instance, they can explain the meanings of the cross on the school logo. Some understand that their work to raise substantial funds for charity helps them to 'change people's lives', after the example of Jesus. Pupils' personal development is fostered well. Worship and good teaching in RE make an important contribution to their spiritual awareness, as when they are given 'thinking time' to visualise a Bible story or to reflect on things which are precious to them. Pupils and their parents appreciate that learning about other faiths helps them to understand those who are different from themselves.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils bring a great sense of expectation and vitality to the daily act of worship. All participate with enthusiasm, responding eagerly to questions and opportunities to take an active part. Their singing, which they say they particularly enjoy, is excellent. They are also able to use times of silence and reflection effectively. 'The praying is good', said one pupil. Worship is well planned and thoughtfully delivered. The incumbent provides much valued input, both through his contribution to planning and in his leadership of worship on a weekly basis. Services are held in church four times a year. These are planned and led by the pupils themselves and are well attended by parents. Worship is given a distinctive Anglican flavour through the use of liturgical responses and coverage of the Church's calendar. Pupils know and use the Lord's Prayer. The school prayer is displayed in classrooms and in the foyer, where there is also a book for pupils to write their own prayers. Prayers at lunchtime and the end of the school day, and the development of interactive prayer corners in classrooms and the entrance area, serve to nurture the place of prayer in the life of the school. Detailed records of worship are kept, but monitoring and evaluation are still at an early stage and do not currently involve pupils or governors. At present, staff are not expected to attend worship on a daily basis. The school recognises that the involvement of all class teachers in its worshipping life would support pupils and further strengthen the sense of community.

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

The Headteacher has a clear Christian vision for the school and pursues it with energy and dedication. In this, she is strongly supported by governors and the staff team. Both she and senior staff and governors know the school well. Following an unsettled period with many staff changes, they are clearly focussed on moving the school forward in order to provide the best possible education and care for every child. Their concern now is to ensure that the new initiatives are securely embedded in the life of the school. Their priorities for development are firmly rooted in accurate and constructive self-evaluation which feeds directly into the School Improvement Plan. The Headteacher manages collective worship well. Although relatively new to the post, the RE co-ordinator provides very effective leadership for the subject. She has facilitated the successful implementation of the new Kent Agreed Syllabus, and has a very clear sense of direction for the further development of the subject. As a result, teachers are confident in their delivery of RE and standards are rising. Links with the parish church of St Laurence are good. The congregation supports the school in prayer. A number of parishioners help in classrooms on a voluntary basis. The school buildings are used regularly for church activities. The incumbent and foundation governors are working to strengthen the links even further. Parents, including parent governors, support the school well. They appreciate the openness with which the school communicates with them, and value the many opportunities to be involved. Pupils are encouraged to undertake responsibilities in school, and they say that the School Council gives them an effective voice. School Councillors are particularly proud of the contribution they make to the running of the school, for example through initiating the 'worry box' and suggesting improvements to playground facilities.