

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Hythe Bay Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Cinque Ports Avenue

Hythe

Kent

CT21 6HS

Diocese: Canterbury

LEA: Kent

Inspected on 10th and 11th December 2007

Last inspected: Not applicable

Unique Reference Number: 131020

Headteacher: Carolyn Chivers

Inspector: Judy Bainbridge, NS No. 328

School context

Hythe Bay Church of England Primary School is a satisfactory Church school with the strong potential for rapid improvement.

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

Hythe Bay is a voluntary controlled two-form entry primary school with full extended services and a children's centre. It also incorporates a unit for pupils and young children with speech, language and communication difficulties. The school was formed in 2006 following the amalgamation of a community infant school and a Church controlled junior school, with both key stages coming together on one site in September 2007. The majority of pupils are of White British origin, with about two thirds being drawn from neighbouring social housing estates. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. In the national tests in 2007, standards in KS1 were average in English and above average in mathematics, but below average in KS2. Nevertheless, the recent OfSTED inspection found that pupils had made satisfactory progress in their first year at Hythe Bay. It judged pupils' personal development as good, and their care, guidance and support as outstanding.

Established strengths

- The Headteacher, senior leaders and governors are deeply committed to building a united school with a caring and inclusive ethos, and to raising standards in all areas of its life.
- The strong and creative partnership with the parish church makes a very positive impact on pupils, parents and staff.
- The teaching of religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development, particularly to their ability to reflect.

Focus for development

- Ensure that staff and governors develop their understanding of what it means to be a Church school and to embed this vision in the school plan.
- Incorporate more explicit Christian values in key documentation, such as the prospectus and policy for behaviour, in order to reflect fully the implicit values already evident in the life and work of the school.
- Work to create an atmosphere for worship which will foster reflection and a sense of reverence.
- Develop the Anglican identity of worship both in practice, and in key documents such as the policy for worship.

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

In talking about their school, staff, governors, pupils and parents emphasise above all the principles of mutual care, trust and respect which permeate its whole life. These principles are demonstrated in very good relationships among all members of the school community. Pupils feel happy and safe in school. Both they and their parents say that the staff are always available to listen, and deal promptly and effectively with any problems that may arise. Older pupils readily show care for younger ones. Stakeholders now need to think through how Christian values are expressed overtly within the prospectus and key policies following the amalgamation of the two schools. Implicit Christian values must be linked to explicit Christian beliefs and teaching. High priority is given to pupils' personal development. Religious Education provides good opportunities for thinking and reflection, and makes a very positive contribution to their spiritual growth. Church days for KS2 pupils also have a strong impact on their spiritual awareness. Year 6 were keen to share their insights into Advent and Christmas following such a day just before the inspection. The school environment is vibrant with displays celebrating pupils' work, including that done in RE. Permanent signs of the school's Christian foundation will further underline its distinctive Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Whole school worship is a new experience for the school, as the hall has been in use for only a few weeks. The strong sense of community that this is helping to generate is greatly valued both by pupils, and by teachers who attend daily with their classes. At this stage, staff are only just beginning to establish the routines and rituals needed to create a sense of expectation and reverence, and to promote an atmosphere which will encourage listening and reflection. For example, although music is played before and after worship, pupils have not yet developed the habit of entering and leaving the hall quietly, so that the music is almost inaudible. However, there is already a sound basis for planning. Content is explicitly Christian. Pupils enjoy the Bible stories they are told, and can apply them to their own lives, such as when they recalled the story of Joseph and its message of forgiveness. Pupils also enjoy opportunities to take an active part in worship. This was especially apparent during an act of worship led by the incumbent, when Year 6 pupils shared the work they had done on an Advent day in church with the rest of the school. In this act of worship, vestments in liturgical colours were used very effectively to extend pupils' understanding of the Church's year. There is much scope for developing the specifically Anglican character of worship expressed in such use of symbolism, and for making this explicit in the policy for worship. Termly church services help to strengthen the school's denominational status. Parents are enthusiastic in their support of these occasions. A programme for the monitoring and evaluation of worship has recently been introduced, but it is too early for it to have had an impact on practice.

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

The Headteacher exercises very caring and committed leadership. Together with senior staff and governors, she shares a clear vision for the school. In a short time they have created a united school, and are successfully beginning to raise standards. However, their vision is not yet expressed in ways that show it to be explicitly and distinctively Christian. This is honestly recognised in their own self-evaluation. They describe themselves as being 'at the beginning of a journey' in their establishment of an ethos which is overtly rooted in Christian values. They have already identified realistic goals, but these still have to be incorporated and embedded in the School Plan. Foundation governors play a very active role in the school. Due in no small part to the energy and vision of the present incumbent, links with the parish church are rightly seen as one of its major strengths. Both he and the non-stipendiary curate have a high pastoral profile in the school, and this is valued by pupils, parents and staff alike. Parents are very supportive of the new school: 'We love our school', one said. They appreciate the many opportunities it is already bringing both for their children and for the wider community. Pupils themselves are increasingly encouraged to undertake leadership roles. The School Council has successfully tackled such concerns as loneliness in the playground, and is contributing effectively to the establishment of a positive ethos in this new

school.

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