

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Shorne Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Cob Drive,
Shorne,
Gravesend,
Kent
DA12 3DU

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 17-18 October 2006

School's unique reference number: 118594

Headteacher: Mr. Robin Aldcroft

Inspector's name and number: Mrs. P.J.Eccles. NS no. 17

School context

Shorne Church of England Primary School is an average sized school of 192 pupils. The school is regularly oversubscribed, although only 20% of the pupils live in the village. The remainder are drawn from the surrounding areas of Gravesend and Medway. Approximately 15% of pupils regularly attend church. The majority of pupils are of White British origin with a small minority from other ethnic backgrounds and other faiths. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is in line with the national average, although this can vary significantly between different cohorts. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff in the past two years, especially in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This has impacted on standards in Year 2, whereby higher attaining pupils, although close to the national average, do not always achieve the higher levels. Standards in Year 6 are above average. The recent OfSTED inspection judged the personal development of the pupils to be excellent.

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

Shorne Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a good Church school.

Established strengths

- The positive Christian ethos of the school, fully endorsed by staff, governors and parents, which provides a framework of care, guidance and support for all pupils.
- The very strong links between the school and the local church.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils to working and learning, together with their knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a member of a church school.

Focus for development

- To further promote the spiritual development of pupils by providing a greater focus on R.E. displays within the classrooms, together with an enhanced focus on the use of Christian symbols in Collective Worship.
- To provide training for Key Stage 1 teachers in leading worship for younger pupils.
- To ensure that all stakeholders are fully involved in the ongoing process of self-evaluating the school as a church school.

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

This school provides pupils with a solid foundation on which to build, based on Christian values of care, friendship, honesty, respect and concern for others. Relationships within the school are very strong so that pupils work hard, feel secure and happy, and readily speak of what it means to attend a church school. They are proud of their school banner and have enjoyed their visits to Canterbury and Rochester cathedrals, where they have also prayed.

The school is planning to participate in the Rochester Church Schools' Festival next year. The school strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; but not enough use is made of displays of pupils' work in Religious Education, either within classrooms or in the hall. There is a strong emphasis on charitable acts, with pupils presently working to raise funds for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Parents support the school wholeheartedly and say it announces itself as a church school and promotes a nurturing environment for their children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship occupies a key role in the life of the school and all teachers attend worship. Whole school worship is well planned and inspiring, and is broadly Anglican in its approach. The headteacher, as co-ordinator, ensures that the three main Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost are celebrated. He is planning to develop the use of Anglican responses into worship and is also considering the introduction of the Eucharist. Pupils regard daily worship as an enjoyable special time in the school day. They pray together and use the period of reflection to focus their thoughts on what has been communicated to them. They also say worship helps them to understand more about God and his world, and that they also worship him through their music-making. Pupils enter the hall quietly to music and they sing tunefully to the piano accompaniment. A lighted candle assists the children to focus on worship, and banners draw attention to the links with the parish church and diocese. Parents also enjoy sharing school worship, especially the regular celebratory assemblies on Friday afternoons. There is strong clergy representation from the incumbent as well as from the priest of a neighbouring parish. Collective Worship within Key Stage 1 is less secure, due to recent staff changes.

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

A strong and effective partnership exists between the chairman of governors and the headteacher, based on mutual respect and integrity. The chairman of governors maintains a high profile in school and acts as a 'critical friend' to the headteacher through monitoring his performance, giving feedback and holding him accountable for the ongoing success of the school. There is a particularly dynamic relationship between the incumbent and the headteacher, which has been instrumental in furthering the strong links between the school and the church. Evidence of this was the recent successful Education Weekend, whereby a number of both sacred and secular events were held in the church and school, finishing with a church service in which the pupils took an active role. The annual carol concert, well attended by parents, begins in the church, progresses by torchlight through the village and concludes in school. The school is particularly active in the community, and the Summer Fair and the Christmas Bazaar are now firmly supported as village activities. The headteacher is effective in his role as co-ordinator for worship; but as Religious Education subject leader, he recognises the need for greater emphasis on monitoring the delivery of RE. This monitoring is necessary to ensure an effective balance between the two attainment targets, to secure level descriptions in planning differentiated lessons, and to promote the on-going spiritual development of pupils. The school's self-evaluation document has been undertaken principally by the headteacher and provides an accurate assessment of school development.