

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Southborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Broomhill Park Road
Southborough
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN4 0JY

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 21st & 22nd September 2006

School's unique reference number: 118712

Headteacher: Mrs. Maureen Harniman

Inspector's name and number: Ms. Jan Thompson. N.S.No.92

School context

Southborough Church of England Primary School is a Voluntary Controlled school of 393 pupils. It was built in the 70s as part of a council housing estate, now an area of mixed housing. The infant and junior schools were amalgamated in the mid 90s under the present head teacher. The school includes a specialist speech and language unit for West Kent, and its pupils are fully integrated into the school. Attainment on entry to the school is at or just below average; pupils make very good progress and achieve above average standards on leaving. The school was recently judged to be outstanding by Ofsted. The school is situated next to Christ Church church, and about 25% of pupils attend this or one of the other local churches.

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

Southborough Church of England Primary School is an outstanding Voluntary Controlled church school.

Established strengths

- The very strong Christian ethos that underpins the whole life of the school.
- The outstanding Christian leadership of the Head Teacher and senior managers in particular.
- The effective impact of Collective Worship on pupils' spiritual development.
- The close links with and good support from the Church.

Focus for development

- To take part in the Diocesan Church Schools Festival, which will give Year 6 pupils an experience of the Eucharist in the setting of Rochester Cathedral.
- To review documentation to ensure it gives a clear description and explanation of what it means to be a church school.

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

This is a thoroughly Christian school. It provides very well for the development of the whole child and the well-being of each individual, giving particular emphasis to pupils' personal and emotional development from early years. Behaviour and relationships are excellent at all levels, with an emphasis on kindness and sensitivity to others. Through activities such as class-led acts of worship for the whole school, pupils grow in confidence and are at ease in talking to adults. Spiritual development is promoted very well through Collective Worship and Religious Education, to which pupils respond thoughtfully and with interest. Very good use is made of the school environment to encourage reflection. For example, there is a quiet garden set in the corner of the playing field, created in memory of a pupil who died. There are also attractive Christian displays around the school and in classrooms, many of which contain

pupils' prayers of thanksgiving for the world in which they live. The school's Eco Council and numerous international links also help pupils to understand their place in the world and their responsibility for the environment. Pupils raise large sums of money for charities, such as World Vision, and can relate concern to help others to the teachings of Jesus.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is central to the life of the school. Collective Worship is well planned on themes, and always has Biblical content and clear Christian teaching. It is organized in a variety of ways, with key stage as well as whole school worship. This ensures age-related worship as well as valued times to bring the whole school together, including the youngest pupils. Staff are supportive of the Christian character of the school and all teachers take turns in leading worship. Teachers attend daily Collective Worship at least 3 days a week and participate well. Although they may attend more often, they are not expected to do so, even though the Diocese encourages this. The school's policy statement on worship does not state clearly enough what goes on and why.

Worship has a positive impact on pupils. Younger pupils spoke very enthusiastically about worship. They enjoy and value the opportunities it gives them to sing and pray together. A candle is used in worship, which older pupils like and find helpful; they understand that it represents Jesus the Light of the World. Pupils have a good understanding of the purpose of worship: as talking to God, thinking about God, singing to God and remembering stories about Jesus. They particularly appreciate quiet times and also the way they can voice their thoughts in songs. Pupils can relate the Christian teaching to their own lives.

The school day is punctuated with worship, for example with thanksgiving before lunch. However, the practice of prayers at the end of the day is patchy and is not whole-school policy. Both pupils and parents spoke positively about the school services that are held in the church to celebrate special festivals. Clergy also provide worship once a week in school. Although worship does reflect Church of England belief and practice, this is not yet sufficiently well developed and pupils have no experience of the Eucharist.

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

The senior management team, very ably led by the Head Teacher, consists of committed Christians who use every opportunity to develop the spiritual dimension of the school. They are given full support in this by the Governing Body. Foundation Governors are active and influential in the school. Two of them act as link governors for Religious Education and Worship, both of which have a high profile in the school and have been very ably managed by a teacher who has just retired. The school has taken seriously its self-evaluation as a church school and this inspection has endorsed most of its judgements. It has shared the process with stakeholders, particularly teachers, but it has not yet extended it fully to pupils and parents. Nor is the school's documentation always clear enough in explaining what it means to be a church school. Parents spoken to during the inspection value the Christian ethos of the school and its links with the local church. Those who chose the school for its good reputation and locality regard the Christian aspects as an added bonus. Christ Church is next door to the school and there is a productive two-way relationship between them and also with other local churches. The curate from Christ Church is particularly effective and well appreciated in the school. As well as being a Foundation Governor, he is one of the clergy who takes the weekly clergy-led worship. He acts as chaplain to the Head Teacher, and has begun a weekly staff prayer-group that teachers have found to be very supportive.