

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St Mary Magdalene Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Kingsman Street  
Woolwich  
London,  
SE18 5PW

**Diocese:**

**Southwark**

School's Unique reference number: 100171

Date of inspection: 30 January 2008

Date of last inspection: May 2002

Headteacher: Claire Veal

Chair of Governors: Revd Grahame Stephens

Inspector's name with National Society inspector's number :Hilary Ferries 276

### **School context**

St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School is an oversubscribed, one form entry school. The large majority of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds and most learners are learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is above that found nationally. Approximately 70% of families are practising Christians, although few attend the local churches. The school is soon to be rebuilt to make the building more suited to teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools Award.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School is an outstanding Church of England School. The Christian ethos is very strong and the school policies and procedures are based on a Christian vision where emphasis is put on living faith. Worship is central to the life of the school and learners talk enthusiastically about the importance of prayer in their lives. Standards and achievement in Religious Education are above national averages. The enthusiastic and positive staff team work very effectively with the rigorous and reflective leadership team and governors to create an inclusive Christian environment where everyone's contribution is recognised and valued.

### **Established strengths**

- the rigorous self evaluation of the leadership team focused on improving the school as a Church school
- the centrality of worship in the life of the school
- the inclusive ethos of Christian care that is demonstrated through the very positive relationships and daily organisation of school life that provide for the individual needs of learners

### **Focus for development**

- develop consistency of good practice in Religious Education (RE) across the school
- feed back the findings and development to the school as a Church school to all stakeholders

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

The school's vision, policies and motto 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' are based on Christian values. This emphasis is visible throughout the school and is seen in the relationships between adults and between staff and learners on a daily basis. Learners interviewed talked about what it means to them to be at a Church school and were very proud of their school.

The leadership team carries out extensive questionnaires and interviews with staff and children to gain views of the Christian dimension of the school. Results are very positive: pupils like the clear system and structures for behaviour and feel safe and secure at school. They enjoy their lessons and like their teachers. Staff feel that they are working 'in a working atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect'.

Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Spiritual development is planned for in all areas of the curriculum especially RE and Collective Worship and this is reflected in the way pupils talk about their work. Learners have a strong sense of right and wrong. Behaviour is very good and the school has a good range of strategies, based on the Christian ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation which make the school a safe learning environment. Older pupils support and encourage younger members of the school community, particularly in the playground, and Year 6 have a range of responsibilities, such as lunchtime buddies, which contribute to the smooth running of the school. Recently a governor has introduced 'WWJD' (What Would Jesus Do) in Collective Worship. This has been greeted very positively by the pupils and the school plans to spread this initiative further. The school supports a range of charities and appeals including the Lent Call, local harvest appeals, Comic Relief and Jeans for Genes. Learners are aware of the importance of respect and tolerance in a multi-cultural society: 'you need to know how to respect other people's religions. If you know what they do you won't question them and hurt their feelings'. 'It teaches us not to make fun of people'. The school celebrates the diversity of its population and pupils say they value this.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

Learners speak very positively of worship and believe that it is a vital part of their school experience: 'It has taught me how to forgive', 'it helps us think about God'. When asked by the leadership team last year about how worship in the school could be improved, learners said that they would like to be more actively involved. This now happens on a regular basis and was mentioned positively by all pupils interviewed. They say they enjoy the chance to take part in worship, both in school and in church, through dance, singing, playing instruments, acting and reading prayers and scripture. There are several pupils of other world faiths in the school and the headteacher has spoken with parents to ensure that they feel their beliefs are valued and respected by everyone. This is welcomed by the parents concerned.

Collective Worship has such impact because it is extremely well planned and it is made relevant to the pupils' lives. Leaders also use a wide range of resources to stimulate thought and gain a response. The headteacher, who is also the worship coordinator, uses the 'Values for Life' Programme and the half termly themes are a starting point for a wide range of worship opportunities. Pupils talk very positively of the different leaders and styles of worship: all teachers lead worship and classes lead worship once or twice a year. The school makes good use of clergy from the local churches, leaders from other churches and one of the governors leads worship twice a term.

All teaching staff attend every act of worship and there is ongoing discussion and evaluation of the different themes and stories. The good use of visual aids and opportunities for reflection in the worship observed was very powerful and contributed well to the pupils' spiritual development.

The school attends the two parish churches for services during the year. The clergy make sure that the children are aware of the distinctive Anglican nature of worship. One example this was a sequence of worship sessions explaining the Peace followed by a church service.

Prayer is central to the life of the school. Each classroom has a prayer board or prayer book used daily. The school has developed a quiet area in the hall, where there is an opportunity for pupils to

write prayers and put them in a special box. The prayers are then used in acts of collective worship. There is also the opportunity for pupils to record, in a book, how prayer has affected their lives and several pupils interviewed mentioned this book and how they valued the opportunity to record their thoughts.

### **Religious Education is good.**

RE is given prime importance in the school. All classes are taught RE for at least 5% of curriculum time. There is regular staff training for RE. Last year, performance management was linked to RE and it has a place in the School Improvement Plan.

The scheme of work, based on the Greenwich Agreed Syllabus and the Diocesan scheme, has a good balance of Christianity and other faiths and shows clear progression across the school. This means that pupils can talk confidently about the different faiths they have studied. 'This is a Christian school and you learn more about Christians. We learn about other religions, it stops you ridiculing others and makes you understand what is important to them. People don't feel left out.' They can also talk about learning from religion and the relevance of what they have learned to their lives. Regular observations of teaching and learning by the coordinator show that teaching is at least good in all year groups and observations carried out during the inspection support this view.

Standards and achievement at level 4 in English, maths and science are above the national average and Religious Education (RE) is too. The school has developed thorough assessment systems, which enable teachers to track progress through the year and then assess which level they are at the end of the year. In some classes the ongoing assessment information is used to inform planning which means that teachers can plan for the needs of pupils who then make very good progress. This is not the case in all classes and the coordinator has identified this as an area for development and evidence from the inspection supports this. Teachers have a good understanding of the two attainment targets learning about and learning from religion and planning shows that lessons have a good balance of the two.

Learners interviewed were keen to show their RE work which showed a good breadth of experiences and activities and that teachers are working to use different learning styles and methods of recording work. The 'freedom birds' in Year 6 were a good example of this. Learners enjoy RE and consider it to be an important subject: 'We wouldn't be a happy school if we didn't learn about this'.

### **The leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding.**

The Christian purpose of the school is expressed powerfully throughout the school in display, policy, behaviour and relationships. The headteacher is very committed to the school as a Church school. She has a clear vision, high expectations and as RE coordinator and worship coordinator is able to give these subjects prominence and status and also make explicit links between them and other areas of school improvement. She is supported by a very effective deputy headteacher and enthusiastic and committed staff.

Governors are involved in developing the school as a Church school and they fulfil their role as 'critical friend' well. In addition to regular planned visits and informal 'drop ins', a group of governors, with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and teacher have formed a 'faith group' and have used the self evaluation toolkit systematically and thoroughly. This has given them a clear idea of areas of strength and of development and they have devised an action plan, which is regularly reviewed and discussed and is being successfully implemented. Stakeholders' responses are taken seriously and acted upon. A survey in 2007 elicited staff and learners' views of worship and changes were made as a result of this, including more active participation by pupils. However the results of the self evaluation are not always fed back to the schools community so not everyone is aware of how their views have made an impact on the school as a whole. This is planned for later in the term.

Parental surveys show that they view the school very positively. They are consulted regularly

about a range of aspects of school life and in Easter 2007 when asked if they felt the school's Christian values and attitudes had a positive affect on their child, a very large majority agreed. Many choose the school because of its Christian dimension, which they believe to be important.

There are close relationships with the local church. Clergy members come in to lead worship, the church newsletter and diocese newspaper are available in the school and the congregation of the parish churches pray regularly for the school.

February 2008 SIAS report, St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School, Kingsman Street, Woolwich, London, SE18 5PW