

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **West Malling Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Old Cricket Ground,  
Norman Road,  
West Malling,  
Kent  
ME19 6RL

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> May 2007

School's unique reference number: 118633

Headteacher: Mrs. Lynette Bickers

Inspector's name and number: Ms Jan Thompson (NS 92)

#### **School context**

Set in the picturesque Kent village of West Malling, the school has 134 pupils who are mostly White British. Very few of its pupils are from regular worshipping Church families. Originally built in 1955, the school has expanded on its site by the village cricket field, with some recent developments and refurbishment. The school was placed in 'special measures' in September 2003 but came out of this in February 2005. However, it continues to take a high level of pupils with special educational needs and has an attached Speech and Language Unit for 18 pupils. Standards on entry to Reception are therefore well below average. Ofsted judged the school to be satisfactory with some strong features.

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

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

#### **Established strengths**

- The caring, inclusive Christian ethos.
- The Christian commitment of the headteacher, supported by governors.
- The calm and inspiring environment of the school.

#### **Focus for development**

- Develop further the use of classrooms to promote spiritual development.
- Ensure that weaknesses in Religious Education are dealt with.

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

This is a small school where every child matters. Despite the challenging circumstances of many of the pupils, the school shows Christian love to each of them and sensitivity to particularly vulnerable pupils. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is good, within a calm working atmosphere, and they show care for each other. The school's motto 'God with us' is promoted effectively as a source of strength to the pupils. Worship in school makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Religious Education, on the other hand, has a limited impact on this because there is not enough emphasis on relating the subject matter to pupils' own lives. The school's Golden Rules emphasise the importance of respect – for oneself, for other people and for the environment. This is lived out in the daily life of the school, with relationships good at all levels and staff acting as good role-models to the pupils. The school's beautiful grounds and gardens and the attractive school building provide an inspiring environment for everyone. An Infant pupil spoke of how she liked using the outdoor open barn as a place for quiet thinking. There are some attractive Christian displays around the school, but the individual focus in each classroom has not yet been developed well enough to impact sufficiently on pupils' spiritual development.

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

Worship is important in this school, demonstrated by the care with which it is prepared and by the good support of adults, including the attendance of teaching assistants. It punctuates the school day, with some younger pupils taking home the practice of saying grace before meals. Pupils understand the purpose of worship as speaking to God, and know that the candle lit for worship is an outward sign that God is always with us. They behave well during worship, both in the hall and in their classrooms, and particularly enjoy opportunities to participate and the singing of Christian songs. Worship develops pupils' understanding of Anglican faith and practice through such things as the signed greeting "Peace be with you", the frequent use of the Lord's Prayer and responses for pupils to join in with during the prayers. The major Christian festivals are celebrated, but Pentecost has had little impact as yet. The school recognizes the need to develop pupils' own prayer writing.

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

The head teacher is strongly committed to the Christian nature of the school. She has worked hard to promote it, with the support of the governing body. For example, they have drawn up a new school mission statement and displayed it well with other Christian symbols and documentation in the new school entrance. The school's sound self evaluation of its church aspects has been extended to relevant stakeholders, including parents and pupils, and has identified suitable areas for development. However, standards in Religious Education (RE) have not improved since the last inspection. The Foundation Governors, who are link governors for RE and Worship, have not yet developed their monitoring and challenging roles within the school community. Currently, apart from the Vicar, there is one relatively new Foundation Governor and one vacancy. The school has kept in touch with the Diocese but has not taken sufficient advantage of Diocesan advice, training and support. There is a good two-way relationship between the school and the parish church, with ideas for further development. The Vicar has close contact with the school, as vice-chairman of governors and in his clergy role, but he currently takes Collective Worship in school only once a month. Parents are generally supportive of the school services held in the church and appreciate the added benefits that a Church school brings.