



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Paul's Church of England VC Primary School

School Lane,
Swanley Village,
Kent
BR8 7PJ

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 31 March 2014

Date of last inspection: 24 March 2009

School's unique reference number: 118590

Headteacher: Desmond Watson

Inspector's name and number: John Ross NS 476

School context

St Paul's is a small school. There are 107 pupils, aged 4-11. Approximately 25% of pupils have a church connection on entry. Most pupils are white British. Only a small proportion speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils known to qualify for free school meals is below average. When compared to national figures, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including a statement of special educational needs, is below average. There are four mixed-age classes. Three new teachers have joined the staff in the last year. Founded in 1862, the school occupies the original building and an additional new building opened in 2007. The school is set in attractive grounds next to St Paul's Church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Paul's Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The joyful and welcoming ethos, in which everyone is treated as unique and as a child of God
- The important place of prayer and reflection for pupils, parents and staff
- The beautiful environment which contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual development
- The good contribution made by Religious Education (RE) to the Christian character of the school, through the opportunities it provides to learn and to reflect

Areas to improve

- Articulate explicitly the school's Christian values and their link to the gospels, so that they are understood and lived out by all stakeholders
- Formalise self-evaluation as a church school so that the views of all stakeholders are recognised by school leaders and governors and lead to improvement planning
- Involve pupils more in the planning, leading and evaluation of the daily act of collective worship

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

St Paul's is a joyful Christian community. Pupils are happy to come to school and attendance figures are higher than average. They are confident, polite and articulate. They are proud of their school. Its small size makes it possible for every child to be nurtured and treated as being of supreme value. Parents, staff and governors all speak of the school's commitment to developing the whole child, in body, mind and spirit. The Christian character informs the approach to behaviour management, based on forgiveness and new chances. Vulnerable pupils and their families are very well cared for, reflecting gospel values. Mindful of the school's Christian character, pupils behave well and relationships at all levels are good. There is strong support for the less fortunate. Charitable support is extensive. Pupils display Christian care for one another, for example older pupils take on responsibility as buddies to younger pupils. The beautiful environment contributes greatly to pupils' spiritual development. As a positive response to the last inspection, a prayer and reflection area has been created inside the building and is used regularly. Additionally, there is a cross and prayer board in every classroom. Outside, there are many opportunities in the natural environment for spiritual development. The curriculum and various additional activities lead to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of pupils. The school has invested considerable time and resources into raising the profile of RE. A new syllabus strengthens pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multicultural world faith while offering opportunities to study other religions. Pupils respect diversity. Teaching in RE is good, pupil attitudes are positive and the subject makes a good contribution to church school distinctiveness. Despite the school's strengths, pupil achievement at Key Stage 2 has been inconsistent recently. Also, while the Christian character is implicit, explicit Christian values do not appear in all school documentation, such as the behaviour policy, neither do they feature prominently in school life. For these reasons, the school is not yet outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners through its distinctive Christian character.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils, parents, staff and governors all recognise the importance of collective worship in the life of the school. Most pupils are positive but a small proportion of older pupils do not enjoy worship. Singing is enthusiastic yet sensitive. There is a clear connection between collective worship and Christian biblical teaching. Responses for the greeting and dismissal give pupils experience of Anglican liturgy. There are many opportunities for prayer and private reflection both in formal worship and throughout the day. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal spirituality. The Lord's Prayer and the Grace, said by everyone, together with Bible readings, contribute to a developing understanding of the person of Jesus Christ and the Christian understanding of the Trinity. Pupils know about some of the major Christian festivals in the church year. Year 6 pupils experience Eucharistic worship when they attend the leavers' service at Rochester Cathedral. The vicar prepares them for this service. A parents' prayer group meets regularly. Collective worship is normally led by school leaders or the youth minister from the local church. Pupils enjoy contributing to worship when asked. Pupils help to plan and lead the end of term services held in the church. However, there are few regular opportunities for pupils to plan and lead daily collective worship. Pupils and other stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in regular evaluation of collective worship. For these reasons, the impact of collective worship on the school community is not yet outstanding.

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

The headteacher and school leaders are dedicated to providing a high quality Christian education for all children in the school. The headteacher, who is a licensed Reader, has served the school faithfully. Together with the staff, he is a role model for behaviour based on Christian values. There is now a strong and committed staff team in place. Governors are

likewise dedicated and want the best for the school and its pupils. The last inspection recommended that the vicar, at that time newly appointed, be invited to take up his position on the governing body. The vicar chose not to take up the invitation but to delegate his place to a member of the church, while remaining a good friend of the school. Links with the local church are strong, through foundation governors and through the youth minister, who is a regular visitor. Some pupils attend the church youth club. The school enjoys strong support from the diocese. The Bishop of Tonbridge visited the school in 2012, the school's 150th anniversary. There are links with other denominations, such as the Salvation Army. The school is active in the local community, for example through fetes, a fashion show and its regular contribution to the Swanley Village Residents' Newsletter. Parents are very positive about the school. Statutory requirements for collective worship and RE are met. The RE coordinator has undertaken training with the diocese. However, within the staff and governing body more widely, preparing for future leadership across church schools has not been a priority. The RE coordinator and link governor have worked successfully to raise the profile of RE in the school following rigorous self-evaluation of the subject. The recommendation from the last inspection that self-evaluation should be improved has only recently begun to be addressed. Leaders and governors have some awareness of the impact of distinctive and explicit Christian values on school life but these values are not clearly stated or articulated. For these reasons, leadership and management of the school as a church school are not yet good.

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