

DIOCESE OF CANTERBURY



STATUTORY INSPECTION OF ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

**Birchington Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School
Park Lane
Birchington
Kent CT7 0AS**

**Diocese : Canterbury
Local Authority: Kent
Date of inspection: 6th May 2009
Date of last inspection: 27th and 28th March 2006
School's unique reference number: 118693
Headteacher: Ms Kathleen Barham
Chairman of Governors: Mr Mark Prescott
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Elizabeth Pettersen 557**

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Birchington is a large primary school with an increasing roll. Children commence their time in the Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are well below those expected for their age and several do not have any pre-school experience. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school has experienced instability in leadership since the last inspection. The last substantive Head left in 2005 and was followed by two acting Heads. The current Headteacher took up her role in 2007.

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Birchington Church of England Primary School is a good Church school. **GRADE 2: GOOD**

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- The visionary leadership of the Headteacher is supported by strong teamwork from the Senior Leadership Team and all members of staff.
- Warm and caring relationships among all members of the school community are rooted in Christian values.
- Worship is a central part of the school day reflecting the school's Christian ethos.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Draw more overtly on Anglican tradition in acts of worship.
- Develop the school aims so that references to the school's Christian character are more explicit.
- Strengthen the role of the church and incumbent in supporting the Christian ethos in line with the school plan.

How well does the school through the distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? GRADE 2 : GOOD

A focus of the previous inspection was to embed Christian values and opportunities for spiritual development into the school's policies and practices, and to monitor of their effectiveness and impact. This has been met. Relationships in the school are good; this was seen in all members of the school community. The Christian character of the school is exemplified in the behaviour of all pupils, who were seen to be polite and responsible. All members of staff play a significant part as role models in creating a caring ethos and ensure that each child feels valued as an individual. Pupils feel safe in their school, stating that they enjoy their lessons and know whom to approach if they feel worried or concerned. The school environment has been developed with quiet seating areas both in and out of the school building, facilitating places for personal reflection and conflict resolution which pupils value. Care for others is further demonstrated in the school's charitable fund raising for national and international charities. The Christian character of the school has been reinforced in special weeks such as "Diversity Week" which helped celebrate difference and individuality. The School Council and Eco Group are strong venues for the Pupil Voice to be heard. They have had an impact on improvements to the school environment, for example in the funding of playground markings and the use of a candle in acts of worship. The teaching of RE gives pupils a further time to reflect on their spiritual development. For example, a lesson about the Good Samaritan helped children consider their role as a good neighbour and how they care for others. The school needs to make its Christian character more explicit in its aims. The learning

environment is enriched by displays, both in the classroom and in the outdoor area. For example there are displays on the Bible, on the theme of Spirituality and on Fair Trade, and art work that celebrates the lives of staff members who have died in recent years. Added to this Christian symbols are prominent throughout the school.

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community? GRADE 2: GOOD

Daily acts of worship are an integral part of the day and all staff attend. Pupils enter and leave quietly whilst listening to music that helps foster a sense of expectancy. The school follows the Canterbury Diocese schemes for Collective Worship as well as introducing themes that meet the needs of the school community. For example, worship includes prayer for individual families and responses to local, national or international concerns. The pupils particularly enjoy the weekly celebration assemblies and the special award of Shaun the Sheep for class conduct. During one act of worship the pupils listened attentively to a story of Samson and later two pupils shared how they had made a mistake and said sorry. In this way pupils could understand the relevance of the Christian content in their everyday lives; a target area from the previous inspection. Prayer is a central part of the school day. There are prayers in class before lunch and at the end of the day as well as times for reflection and stillness during Collective Worship. A particular strength is the use of pupil's own prayers during worship. The school plans to adopt a more rigorous approach to the monitoring of Collective Worship involving staff, pupils and governors, and to make the Anglican tradition in Collective Worship more overt.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church school? GRADE 2: GOOD

The Headteacher is providing a clear lead in the development of this Church school. She is competently supported by a strong Senior Leadership Team, with all staff promoting a Christian ethos. The centrality of worship and spiritual development is seen in the creation of the Spirituality Team made up of the RE, PSHE and Collective Worship co-ordinators. The team has had a positive impact upon the development of the curriculum and staff well being. Staff have been carefully nurtured during a period of change in the school with times for meditation and reflection during the week, plus a staff well being group, and creativity evenings. The school's self- evaluation is thorough and reflective, having drawn upon the views of all stakeholders in its completion. The RE subject leader is providing effective support to teaching staff in the monitoring of plans and building confidence in teaching RE. The subject is well resourced and ICT was seen to be used well, for instance in a lesson to teach about the Five Pillars of Faith in Islam. A focus for development from the previous inspection was to involve all stakeholders in the ownership of the school's Christian vision. This has been successfully implemented. The school has a keen sense of its mission and has links with the local church for both worship and curricular work. Links with the local community are well developed. The school will value the plans that the incumbent has to increase his involvement in the school's Christian vision.