

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Chevening (St Botolph's) Voluntary Aided CE Primary School

Chevening Road, Chipstead, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 2SA

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Date of inspection: 22 November 2012

Dates of last inspection: 2-3 April 2008

School's unique reference number: 118715

Headteacher: Helen Jones

Chair of governors: Revd. Christopher Smith

Inspector's name and number: Jan Thompson No 92

School context

Chevening (St Botolph's) is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary school in a small Kent village about 2 miles from Sevenoaks. It takes pupils from a wide catchment area and is oversubscribed. About 75% of its 207 pupils come from church going families. Standards on entry are slightly above average and are well above average by the end of Year 6. Both the headteacher and rector are relatively new, having been in post for two years and three years respectively.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chevening (St Botolph's) Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

This is a very strong Church school that has built on its previous outstanding status and has gone from strength to strength in recent years.

Established strengths

- This prayerful community seeks to honour God in all that it does.
- Pupils gain a deep knowledge and understanding of Christianity.
- There is strong Christian leadership and management of this Church school.
- A very close relationship exists between the church, school and local community.

Focus for development

- Continue to improve on use of assessment in Religious Education (RE).
- Expand pupils' understanding of religions other than Christianity through visits to their places of worship.

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

This Church school is a caring establishment where staff and pupils endeavour to love God and one another, as Jesus commanded, as well as reaching out to the local community and beyond. School life is based on clear Christian values, focusing most recently on fellowship, forgiveness and trust. Relationships and behaviour are exemplary at all levels throughout the school because of their shared values and because this community prays together. A notable innovation that worked well recently was a Saturday evening prayer meeting at the beginning of the school year to which all stakeholders were invited, including pupils from Years 5 and 6. Twenty five people attended and prayed in all areas of the school. Both RE and worship contribute very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. For example, worship songs are chosen to emphasise that all are valued and loved as children of God, and RE gives many opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own spirituality. The school develops responsible citizens. Not only are they well informed and concerned, but they take action to help and organise events to raise money for charities. For example, Year 5 pupils planned

and led an act of worship for Christian Aid Week, inspiring a class by class collection, which they organised. The school environment is very well used to promote spiritual development. Interactive prayer corners in every classroom and in common areas are well used by pupils. The hall has been redecorated to create a good atmosphere for worship and to promote Christian values. It has a large 'Maypole' picture, created by pupils from all year groups, with Bible verses chosen by pupils, staff, parents and governors. It shows Christ as the centre point, the strength that connects all things. Year 6 pupils are now planning an outdoor space for reflection that can be used all year round. The school recently won a special award for their Bishop's Commendation entry, demonstrating their strengths as a Church school. They are now looking forward to the Bishop of Rochester's visit in connection with this.

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

Pupils respond enthusiastically to all aspects of school worship. They particularly appreciate its interactive and inclusive nature, and are keen to participate. For example, in the act of worship during the inspection, some musicians accompanied the main hymn and pupils read the opening greeting. There were many volunteers to say their own prayers or read those from the prayer-box. These prayers were linked by everyone saying, 'Lord, hear our prayer'. Singing plays an important part in school worship, with modern religious songs. Pupils and staff have a good understanding of the divine nature of worship and find it helpful for their own personal spiritual journeys. Pupils say that they learn more about God and the Bible. They say that prayer helps them to think about God and feel close to him. Pupils had lots of explanations for lighting the candle, which represents Jesus as the Light of the World. One said, 'He lights the way so that we lead a good life'. Another said, 'You can feel the light in your heart.' Learners are familiar with a range of Anglican traditions, and this is helped by the rector taking worship once a week. The worship themes follow the Church calendar, and special festivals are celebrated in St. Botolph's Church. On three Sundays a year, many members of the school attend Family Worship at the church, one of which is a Eucharist. The rector teaches Year 6 pupils about the Eucharist and they usually take part in this at the annual Church Schools Festival in Rochester Cathedral. This year they joined in a Eucharist at the local home for the elderly. Collective worship is very well organised by the headteacher and monitored by governors, with pupils now also being involved in this.

The effectiveness of Religious Education is good.

The school closely follows the Diocesan RE syllabus. Its clear lesson plans ensure a good balance between studying religion and applying it to pupils' own lives. It also gives teachers clear learning intentions, related to the national RE levels. These have helped them to assess pupils' progress, which is outstanding at Key Stage 1 and mostly good or better at Key Stage 2. Attainment in RE is above average at the end of each key stage, with some evidence of Level 5 work in Year 6. However, some teachers are not yet confident to adapt the levels in their lesson plans to challenge pupils further in lessons. RE is very creative, with an imaginative range of strategies employed and good use of technology. This elicits a very positive response from pupils. For example, a Year 3 lesson on Passover began with pupils re-enacting the Exodus in the school grounds before tasting and learning about the symbolic foods of the special meal. Older pupils respond particularly well to the open culture for discussion, where they feel comfortable expressing both faith and doubt. One parent wrote, 'My child has been particularly inspired this year by her RE lessons. She is full of wonder and questions and wanting to discuss it further with me at bedtime.' The syllabus concentrates on Christianity at Key Stage 1, giving pupils a very sound foundation in their knowledge and understanding of the faith of the school. This is built on at Key Stage 2 and other religions are also introduced, which pupils study with interest. They appreciate the importance of showing respect for people with different beliefs and practices. However, the school does not make enough use of visits to non-Christian places of worship. RE is given good support by the headteacher, as a core subject, and the subject leader benefits from on-going Diocesan training. She is currently trialling a variety of methods to record assessment.

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

The governing body has ensured that the two main development points from the last inspection have been addressed. Collective worship is now very creative and more recently there has been a focus on assessment in RE. Many other developments have also taken place as a result of the Christian commitment and leadership of the headteacher and rector. The governing body has engaged with distinctive Christian values and made the Christian ethos one of four new 'curriculum drivers' to give direction to the planning and delivery of all lessons. The school improvement plan has a main strand each year reflecting this aspect of school life and ensuring that identified issues are addressed. The Strategy Committee of the governing body has ensured that the school's self evaluation is thorough and accurate. All stakeholders are included in helping to evaluate the school as a Church school. Questionnaires for parents and pupils have encouraged reflection by all concerned on the importance of a Christian education, and a parents' forum has been involved in reviewing the impact of Christian values on school life. Links between the parish, school and families have become even stronger than at the last inspection. The rector, who has children at the school, continues to fill the role of chair of governors and link governor for RE. Parents are very supportive and many chose Chevening (St Botolph's) because it is a Church school.

SIAS report November 2012 St Botolph's Chevening CE Primary, TN13 2SA