

Horton Kirby Church of England Primary School

Horton Road, HORTON KIRBY, Dartford, Kent DA4 9BN

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Date of inspection: 17 January 2013

Date of last inspection: 8 July 2008

School's unique reference number: 118861

Headteacher: Glenn Pollard

Chair of Governors: vacant

Incumbent: Fr. Nick Williams

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

School context

Horton Kirby Church of England Primary School is a Foundation School that was previously Voluntary Controlled. First established in 1857, it now resides in buildings going back to 1970. Its 293 pupils come mainly from the two local villages of Horton Kirby and South Darenth. Pupils are mostly of White British heritage and come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Only a small percentage are from church-going families. The headteacher took over almost three years ago from the retiring headteacher who had served the school for more than twenty years. The deputy headteacher has been in post for two years and also acts as co-ordinator for Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship. A new parish priest has only just been appointed, replacing the last vicar who left because of illness. A number of governors are new and a new chair of governors has yet to be appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Horton Kirby as a Church of England school are satisfactory

The school has made progress since its last inspection nearly five years ago and there are signs that it will improve further but, at the time of this inspection, it remains a satisfactory Church school.

Established strengths

- The happy, inclusive and respectful Christian ethos, seen in the caring relationships throughout the school.
- The Christian commitment of the senior leadership team.
- The concern for global citizenship during Christian Aid Week.

Focus for development

- Regularly involve parents, pupils and staff in the self-evaluation process of the school as a Church school.
- Promote the school's explicit Christian values and vision more clearly in publications such as the school's Mission Statement.
- Monitor and support all types of Collective Worship, including acts of worship led by teachers in their classrooms.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity by including more Bible teaching in Collective Worship.

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

The school's aims begin with the statement 'The values informing the life and relationships of our school community are those of the Christian faith.' Fifteen Christian values have been identified and are promoted on posters throughout the school. Pupils know that these values, such as forgiveness, peace, thankfulness and respect, are based on the life and teaching of Jesus. They remembered, for example, that forgiveness is an important theme in the Lord's

Prayer. They also know the meaning and significance of 'WWJD' – 'What would Jesus do?' These Christian values have a positive impact on behaviour and relationships across the school, making this a friendly, inclusive and caring community. Pupils say that Collective Worship has an impact on how they behave. For example, it helps them to be thankful for all that they have. This is particularly true when they keep Christian Aid Week each May by raising money for poor people around the world. RE has a good impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development, as it links the religious content with pupils' own lives. This has improved since the last inspection. For example, during this inspection, Year 2 pupils were exploring books that were special to them; Year 3/4 pupils were creating badges to symbolise their own concerns; and Year 6 pupils were thinking about the qualities of a good friend. Pupils have a broad understanding of Christianity but their more detailed knowledge of Bible stories and Christian festivals is limited. The school environment makes a better contribution to pupils' spiritual development than at the last inspection. All classrooms now have a prayer area where pupils from most classes make good use of the prayer boxes. There are also good displays in the entrance hall and some other common areas.

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is satisfactory

Pupils participate well during acts of worship, joining in the singing and responding with good humour, but there are limited opportunities for them to lead worship. Pupils have not been involved in evaluating and improving their worship, despite a recommendation in the last report. A questionnaire at the time of this inspection showed that younger pupils particularly enjoy Collective Worship and find it helpful, but some Year 6 pupils expressed negative attitudes towards it. Many pupils value the time to pray to God and say that it helps them to believe in God and that 'It makes us feel like God is watching over us.' They say that it helps them to feel calm, safe and peaceful. Collective Worship follows the Church's year, marking its seasons and festivals. Pupils are familiar with many Christian festivals but do not yet celebrate Pentecost in school. There has been intermittent support from the parish church since the last inspection, but the new vicar now leads school worship once a fortnight. There are plans to introduce a school Eucharist, but Year 6 pupils do not yet participate in the annual Church Schools Festival in Rochester Cathedral, which would give them an experience of Eucharistic worship. The deputy headteacher co-ordinates Collective Worship and keeps careful records, but the plans do not include enough Bible content. He has now begun to use the Diocesan scheme. He has monitored some acts of worship, but not those that take place in classrooms, and has therefore not supported teachers in leading genuine acts of worship. Teachers now attend daily Collective Worship with their classes, and some assistant staff also attend. This is a marked improvement on the last two inspections and indicates the importance now being placed on this aspect of school life.

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

Developments have taken place in response to the last inspection five years ago and all the issues have been addressed. The Governing Body set up a committee to organise the self-evaluation of the school as a Church school and to report back, resulting in a greater involvement by governors. However, other stakeholders were not involved and questionnaires only went out to parents and pupils at the time of this inspection. The deputy headteacher, as subject leader, monitors RE and ensures that it now receives sufficient curriculum time and is taught more creatively. However, standards are not as high as they should be because teachers do not make enough use of the national level descriptors for planning and assessment. The school now makes better use of diocesan support, but the deputy headteacher's heavy workload has prevented him from accessing the regular training for RE subject leaders. In response to the expectations of the new inspection framework of 2009, there has been a focus on the school's Christian values. However, their Christian basis is not always made sufficiently clear in the school's documentation, such as the new Mission Statement. Parents like the friendly, caring ethos of the school, and many comment positively on the religious life of the school. Links with the parish now look set to be more consistent. The new vicar has experience of some outstanding Church schools in the diocese and has many good ideas for developing the school and church within the community.