

## **Lamberhurst St Mary's Church of England Primary School**

Pearse Place, Lamberhurst  
Kent TN3 8EJ

**Diocese:** Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Date of inspection: 26 November 2012

Date of last inspection: 27 March 2008

School's unique reference number: 118604

Headteacher: Caroline Bromley

Chair of Governors: Tracie Dodd

Inspector's name and number: John Ross (NS 476)

### **School context**

Lamberhurst St Mary's is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School for pupils aged 4 to 11. There are 148 pupils on roll. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils joining the school with an existing church connection is around 30%. The school operates in purpose built accommodation, opened in 2006, set in pleasant grounds.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Lamberhurst St Mary's as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The school has made outstanding progress in developing its Christian identity since the last inspection. It lives up to its motto, 'Learning for life in the love of God,' through its work and its daily life.

### **Established strengths**

- The happy, inclusive and respectful Christian ethos, through which every person's supreme value is celebrated
- The significant progress in developing the school's Church school identity since the last inspection
- The inspiring and visionary Christian leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by all staff and the governing body
- The school environment, both inside and outside, which clearly proclaims the school's Christian foundation and strongly supports spiritual development

### **Focus for development**

- Provide more regular opportunities for pupils to plan and lead acts of Collective Worship
- Develop pupils' skills of reflection so they may contribute further to the self-evaluation of the school as a Church school

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

The school prospectus accurately states: 'Our Christian ethos is at the heart of everything we do.' Christian values underpin the school's daily life. Values such as love, happiness, friendship, peace, faith and forgiveness are prominently displayed and provide a visible focus for the school's work. Inclusiveness and respect are also embedded within the school's ethos. Pupils readily make friends with those in other year groups. Older pupils have the opportunity to train as 'playground friends' to support the younger ones. There is a high uptake of the many extra curricular activities on offer, which contribute strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Everyone is loved and cared for, not least the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Regular small acts of kindness between pupils, for example helping a child who has fallen in the playground, typify the care shown by pupils for

one another. Compassion, understanding and forgiveness are exemplified in relationships at all levels. The school environment makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The school's Christian foundation is highly evident both within the building and outside. The entrance area features a large and attractive mosaic, made by pupils and shows the school as the centre of the community. There is a regularly updated Religious Education (RE) and worship focal point in every classroom. Finlay's Garden, created in memory of a young baby, provides an area for quiet reflection. There is a strong and fruitful partnership with Chikombola School in Malawi. Headteachers of both schools have taken part in exchange visits. Lamberhurst St Mary's is raising money to provide two new classrooms at Chikombola School. RE makes a strong contribution to the spiritual and moral development of pupils because it enables them to apply ideas learnt about religion to their own lives.

### **The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective Worship plays an essential role in the life of the school. It is very well coordinated by the headteacher, using materials provided by the Diocese of Rochester. There are daily prayers, before lunch and at the end of the day, in addition to formal acts of worship for the whole school. Special services are held at the parish church to celebrate Christmas, Easter and Harvest. Pupils enjoy worship, and frequently take opportunities to contribute through readings, drama and prayer. During the inspection, an act of worship offered time for reflection, prayer and a presentation by Year 6 pupils on the meaning of Advent. The greeting was introduced by one of the youngest pupils in the school. It concluded with everyone singing 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' reverently and respectfully. Elements of Anglican worship, including responses and the Lord's Prayer, are familiar to everyone. Pupils know about most major Christian festivals and the school is seeking to extend this knowledge. During Collective Worship in the hall, a focal point includes a table with a cross and candle and, on the day of inspection, an Advent wreath. Behind the table, a mural features a Salvadorian cross and images of children from a range of cultures and faiths including some with disabilities. The school prayer, composed with the help of pupils, articulates the Christian values of the school. The school has plans to increase pupil involvement in planning and leading worship.

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

The Christian leadership of the headteacher is visionary and inspiring. She has a clear vision for the school as a Church school which is understood and supported by all stakeholders. The headteacher is strongly supported by the whole staff. One said: 'We live and breathe the values.' Staff feel well cared for. When one became seriously ill, the entire school assembled to pray for her. All were delighted at her subsequent recovery. Pupils, staff, parents and governors were all moved by this gesture of friendship and faith. Teachers and support staff are fully integrated and all feel valued. Governors are active, supportive, and frequently in school. Self-evaluation is robust and accurate and involves all stakeholders. The views of parents and pupils are gathered through questionnaires and focus groups. The school plans to develop pupils' skills in self-evaluation further, so they may become even more actively involved in this area. There are strong and productive links with the parish church and clergy, as well as with other denominations and faiths. Clergy regularly visit the school and actively engage with pupils. The Bishop of Rochester recently visited. The school has established itself as a focal point in the local community. Local residents are regular and welcome visitors to the school, for example at a lunch club for senior citizens. The school has addressed successfully all the points for development in the last inspection and has made considerable further progress. The school improvement plan has clear targets for its development as a Church school. Capacity for further improvement remains strong.