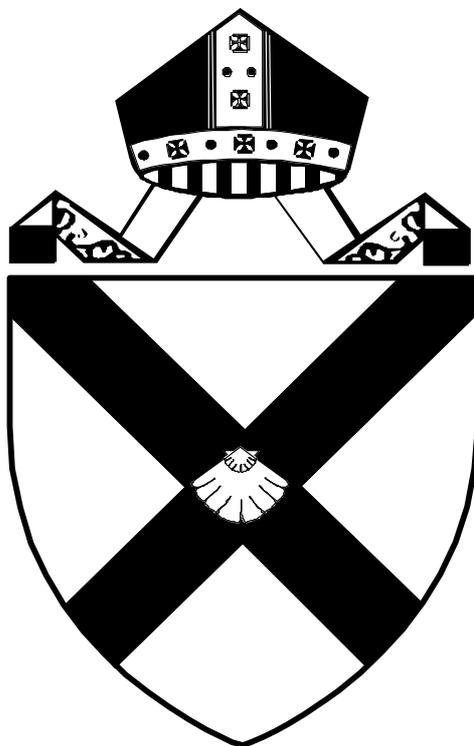


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2009



**The Pilgrim Church of England
Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Warwick Crescent, Borstal, Rochester, ME1 3LF
Medway LA

Unique Reference No: 118722

Headteacher: Mr. Justin Smith

Chair of Governors: Mr. Mark Wilkes

Incumbent: Revd. Matthew Prior

Inspector: Mr. John Viner NS No.144

Inspection: 2 November 2009

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

How distinctive and effective is the school as a Church of England school?

The Pilgrim School is an outstanding Church school.

Overall judgement: **Grade1: OUTSTANDING**

SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Pilgrim School is a relatively new Church of England Voluntary Controlled School. It serves the parish of St Matthew's in the Medway suburb of Borstal, near Rochester. It transferred to attractive new buildings in November 2008. Most of its 229 pupils are of white British heritage. There is a higher than average percentage of pupils with special needs or disabilities but they and all pupils make good progress. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are around the national average. Approximately 10 percent of pupils and their families attend St Matthews or one of the other local churches, which has increased since the last inspection. OFSTED recently judged the school's effectiveness to be good.

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- Explicit Christian values underpin the school and are evident in all aspects of its work.
- Collective Worship is at the heart of the school
- The strong Christian vision of the headteacher is shared by staff and governors.
- Religious Education (RE) makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Provide pupils with a focus for worship to help them collect their thoughts.
- Express the school's Church of England foundation more explicitly.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? Grade 1: Outstanding.

The school is explicitly grounded in the Christian values of reverence, wisdom, thankfulness, service, friendship and justice. These provide its foundation, are evident in its work and confirm its distinctive Christian identity. Regardless of their own faith, parents recognise that their children benefit from this ethos. One parent wrote, "The school's outlook is one of optimism, its Christian values, afforded to all, make for a refreshing and solid foundation for children's education as well as life." This ringing endorsement is echoed by many parents. A Christian parent commented that their child's faith was nurtured and supported by the school. Pupils too speak of feeling 'special and cared for'. As a result, they make good progress, both personally and academically. Because of the good care they receive, pupils develop into compassionate individuals who care for each other and the wider world. They say that, 'it just happens, everyone is very friendly.' Pupils also say that it is important to put Christian love into action and know that this is why they support a child in Ecuador. RE is well taught and so makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The school environment is well used to promote pupils' spiritual development through thoughtful displays with opportunities to reflect. The school is proudly Christian, although its Anglican identity is less explicit because, in signage and documentation, it is always abbreviated.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community? Grade 2: Good

Collective Worship is central to school life. Pupils pray at lunchtime and at the end of the day, so that there is a constant sense of the importance of prayer. All classroom staff attend daily Collective Worship with the pupils, who know that it is a special part of each day. Worship is carefully planned around a weekly theme based on Christian values. It is well led, both by staff and by visiting Christian leaders. Pupils say that they especially enjoy the visits by the incumbent and teams from the Family Trust. Since the last inspection, the school has increased opportunities for pupils to experience Anglican aspects of worship. For example, the incumbent leads worship regularly, use is made of some features of Anglican liturgy, and wall hangings mirror the church's seasonal colours. Good use is made of the parish church for special acts of worship. These are so well attended by parents that there is standing room only. One pupil wrote that, "I feel really happy when I go to special services in church." Pupils also enjoy taking part in the Diocesan Church schools events that are held in Rochester Cathedral. This includes the Medway 'Pilgrimage' for younger pupils and the Church Schools Festival, with Eucharist, for Year 6 pupils. Pupils enjoy worship: they say that they like singing and praying. They know the Lord's Prayer and are encouraged to reflect and pray privately, although these opportunities are inconsistent. They have good attitudes to worship, and sing enthusiastically and tunefully. Although pupils behave respectfully and sit quietly, the best use is not made of musical and visual foci to help them prepare for worship reverently.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church school? Grade 1: Outstanding

The headteacher provides a clear Christian vision for the school that is shared by governors and key staff. Since the last inspection, Foundation Governors have engaged earnestly with shaping the school's Christian distinctiveness and all governors celebrate and promote it. This strong leadership ensures that the work of the school, its policies and practices, are deliberately grounded in those particular Christian values that it has identified as fundamental. The school leaders, skilfully led by the headteacher, are engaged in an ongoing process of monitoring and self-evaluation that is driving development planning in which the school's Christian character is key. The headteacher's strategic planning has been well supported by diocesan officers. Although the school leaders have considered future leadership needs, this is not yet a part of the regular evaluation process. The strong and positive relationship with the parish church contributes to the effective leadership of the school. The incumbent is a frequent and popular visitor, providing pastoral care to the staff and families. One parent remarked that her child "enjoys the relationship the school has with the local church. It makes her feel special." The church partnership also embraces the village's Baptist church and the school has been instrumental in facilitating community friendship days involving both churches. This seamless relationship between school and church combines with the excellent leadership of the headteacher and the strong critical support of the governors to ensure that the capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.