



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Horton Kirby Church of England Primary School**

Horton Road, Horton Kirby, Dartford, Kent DA4 9BN

**Previous SIAS grade: Satisfactory**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 7 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 17 January 2013

School's unique reference number: 118861

Headteacher: Glenn Pollard

Inspector's name and number: Anne Southgate 820

#### **School context**

Horton Kirby is a larger than average sized primary school. Pupils come mainly from local, non-churchgoing families, and they are predominantly from white British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special needs is lower than average, as is the number who are eligible for pupil premium. There is a small number of pupils from Traveller backgrounds. The Religious Education (RE) co-ordinator has been on sick leave since October 2015, and the incumbent is currently also on sick leave.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Horton Kirby as a Church of England school are good**

- Strong leadership has established a clear Christian vision for the school.
- Self-evaluation as a church school is rigorous and leads to constant improvements.
- The focus on the Christian character since the previous SIAS inspection has led to improved achievement and behaviour.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Ensure consistency across the school, so that the Christian character enables all pupils to develop academically and spiritually equally well.
- Develop the understanding of the Christian basis to the school's core values amongst all stakeholders, including parents and carers.
- Extend leadership of worship to offer a greater variety of worship styles.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to lead worship.

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

Clear Christian values of respect, responsibility and perseverance are visible around the school

and on the school's website. They are also included in key documentation, which addresses an action point from the previous SIAS inspection. Pupils talk with ease about how the values are rooted in biblical teaching. For example, a Year 2 pupil explained clearly that Mary and Joseph showed perseverance by travelling to Bethlehem. Pupils apply the values to their own lives by referring to perseverance in learning and to respect and responsibility for others. As a result, achievement, including that of the more vulnerable pupils, is good. Behaviour has improved because pupils are enabled to reflect on their attitudes and actions, and to consider "what would Jesus do?". This is driven by the vision of the school as a Christian family, where all are interdependent. Parents are made aware of the importance of good attendance as it not only affects their own child's progress, but has an impact on the whole community. High quality, interactive displays around the school remind everyone of the Christian basis to the core values. However, the Christian vision is not consistently displayed in all classrooms. In most classes, pupils use the attractive reflection areas, enabling them to take time to think and to pray. This is supported by a carefully organised prayer garden, and by a whole school reflection area. As a result, most pupils develop well spiritually. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Pupils are helped to appreciate diversity, and they recognise the importance of learning about people who are different from themselves. There is some outstanding practice in RE, in which teachers skilfully help pupils to reflect on their learning and to apply it to their own lives. There is however, a lack of consistency in RE across the school, which means that a minority of pupils do not learn as well as most others.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Despite coming mainly from non-worshipping families, pupils gather respectfully for collective worship. Most pupils and adults participate fully. Worship draws links between the school's Christian values and Bible stories, and pupils remember these well. This addresses a development point from the last SIAS inspection. Most pupils have a good knowledge of Jesus' teaching and of key Christian beliefs, such as that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christian festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, are celebrated but pupils do not have a developed understanding of the whole of the church's year. Many pupils are keen to take a more active part in collective worship and they are increasingly doing so. Effective monitoring and evaluation have resulted in the creation of a 'Leading Lights' group of pupils, who are at an early stage of leading worship. This is appreciated by pupils, who feel that leaders have listened to their requests for greater involvement. Class worship takes place when the other key stage gathers in the hall. This is now monitored and supported more effectively, and it emulates the pattern of whole school worship. This addresses an issue from the previous inspection. Many pupils value the time afforded to them to reflect and to pray, both during collective worship and throughout the school day. They appreciate that the incumbent offers prayers from class prayer boxes to God when he leads collective worship every fortnight. Senior leaders lead collective worship regularly, but there are few other leaders. This restricts the diversity of worship styles that pupils experience. A Eucharist service has been introduced, but it is at an early stage because the incumbent has been ill. Worship themes often lead to action. An example of this is that worship focused on responsibility for caring for our planet led to recycling in the school, and also to participation in the 'clean for the Queen' project.

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

Strong leadership has resulted in a more explicit Christian character for the school. This has helped to raise standards and to improve behaviour. Leaders have set a clear, Christian vision for the school. They have communicated this well to pupils and to most adults working in the school. Parents and carers however, do not all understand the significance of Horton Kirby being a church school. Deepening the Christian character further is taken seriously, and it is

part of the school's development plan. All stakeholders are consulted and involved in self-evaluation, thus addressing an issue from the previous inspection. A 'faith team' has been created specifically to monitor and to evaluate church school issues. This leads to constant improvements. Leaders invest in training for staff and governors. This has increased the level of understanding about working in a church school and it is helping to develop future leaders of church schools. The partnership with the local church has strengthened since the last inspection, so that now all pupils are familiar with the inside of an Anglican church. Pupils' prayers are distributed amongst parish prayer groups. This helps parishioners to understand more clearly the lives and concerns of young people. The relationship with the church is, therefore, of mutual benefit. Leaders visit other local church schools to observe and to share good practice. This has resulted in improvements, such as the introduction of the Leading Lights group. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Despite the long-term absence of the RE co-ordinator, monitoring and development of this area is continuing under the leadership of the deputy headteacher. Leaders have done much to strengthen the Christian character of the school, but the good practice that exists is not consistent across the whole school.

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