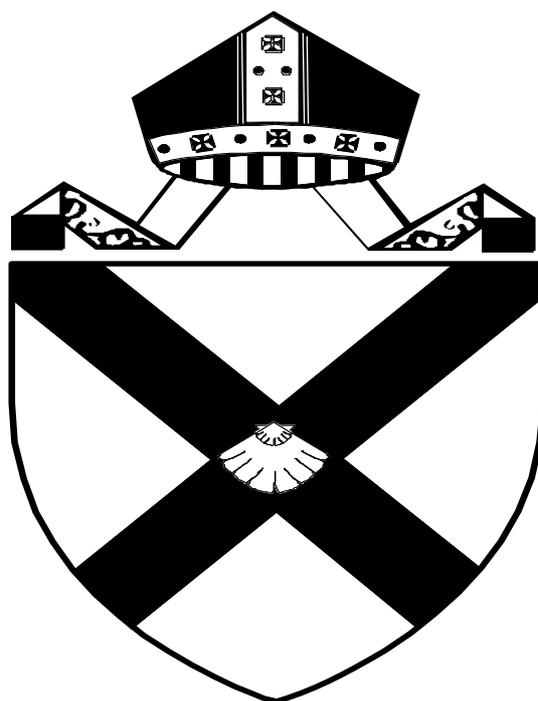


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2011



**St. Mark's Church of England
Primary School**

Aylesbury Road, Bromley, Kent BR2 0QR

Voluntary Aided

Bromley LA

Unique Reference No: 101648

Head Teacher: Mrs Kate Owbridge

Chair of Governors & Incumbent:

Revd. Stephen Varney

Inspector: Ms Jan Thompson N.S.92

Inspection: 20th June 2011

Summary judgment

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

Overall Grade 2: Good

St. Mark's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School in Bromley is a good Church school.

School Context

St. Mark's is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School in Bromley. Founded in 1871, the school moved to its present site in the 1980s and has had a number of extensions so that it now accommodates its 430 pupils very well. The admissions policy gives preference to families living in the local parish and consequently very few pupils are admitted because of their church background. About 30% of pupils are from regular worshipping Church families. Sixty percent of pupils are White British, with an increasing number of pupils from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds. This is a very popular school with very good reputation in the local community and was judged by Ofsted to be good.

Established strengths

- The support of St Mark's Church, under the guidance of the Vicar who is also the chair of governors.
- The clear explanation of the school's Christian distinctiveness in its prospectus and Mission Statement.
- The strong prayer life of the school for pupils and adults.

Focus for development

- Develop more interactive prayer stations in classrooms.
- Consider giving pupils an experience of the Eucharist.
- Rewrite the Collective Worship policy statement to set out clearly and succinctly what the school does as well as why it does it.
- All teachers should ensure that they set sufficiently challenging work in Religious Education.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all its learners? Grade 2: Good

The school's new Mission Statement, with a Trinitarian formula, expresses the Christian basis for this caring community. Christian values such as love, goodness, humility and self-control are identified and reinforced in school life. For example, in a Year 2 RE lesson on one of Jesus' parables, pupils talked about what it meant to be boastful or humble. Pupils say that this school teaches them how to behave and helps to make them better people. For example, an act of worship taught them to give of their best to each other. Pupils' concern for others extends beyond the school to raising money for charities, which they understand as following Jesus' teaching. They also appreciate the importance of learning about other religions in RE, to show respect for people of other faiths and to see things from different perspectives. There are many opportunities in school for spiritual development, particularly through the prayer life of the school. There is also a new Praise Dance club that was introduced to pupils during a special week to celebrate Pentecost. The school environment is used to display Christian symbols and prayers, but few of these are interactive enough to engage pupils' interest.

What is the impact of Christian Worship on the school community?

Grade 2: Good

This school is a worshipping community. The day starts in every class with prayers, in addition to Collective Worship, grace before lunch and a set prayer at the end of the day. Pupils respond reverently and they willingly offer their own prayers in class. Pupils have been involved in evaluating worship, as suggested at the last inspection. Their responses show their awareness of the divine nature of worship. They know that it is an opportunity to thank and praise God and to say sorry. One pupil said that worship is “to show how much we love God” and another said that it “spread the love of Jesus.” Pupils appreciate coming together as a school for Collective Worship. They say it brings them closer together and they learn how to live better lives. They enjoy the singing but would also appreciate more quiet time for reflection. All acts of worship are Christian and make use of Anglican prayers and responses, particularly the Lord’s Prayer. Clergy lead worship for the entire week about every three weeks, giving pupils good knowledge and understanding of Christianity. However, the school does not celebrate the Eucharist and has not made good use of the Eucharist service for Year 6 at the annual Church Schools Festival in Rochester Cathedral. There are no withdrawals from daily Collective Worship and all staff now attend, which has improved since the last inspection. The policy statement, although thoughtful, does not give a clear picture of what goes on.

How effective is Religious Education (RE)? Grade 3: Satisfactory

A new RE syllabus has recently been devised in school and a scheme of work produced from Guildford and Rochester Diocesan lesson plans. This has ensured a continued emphasis on Christianity as well as an introduction to four other religions. It has overcome a criticism at the last inspection by helping pupils to relate what they learn about religions to their own lives. This helps RE to contribute well to their spiritual and moral development. Progress and attainment are good in some classes but variable across the school. Level descriptions feature clearly in the lesson plans and this has helped some teachers to produce challenging and stimulating work for their pupils. Others, however, are not setting suitable work to achieve the objectives of the lesson. Therefore, not all teachers are yet making enough use of the level descriptions to raise standards, which was a recommendation at the last inspection. Nor is RE assessed and recorded against the levels to show rates of progress. Marking is often thorough and encouraging but rarely helps pupils to achieve more. Pupils enjoy RE in Key Stage 1, but their attitudes to the subject vary as they go up through the school. Visits to places of worship, like the Jewish synagogue and Hindu temple, are popular but there are no such visits in Years 5 and 6.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church school? Grade 2: Good

The governing body has addressed all the issues raised at the last inspection. Of particular note are the new school prospectus and Mission Statement that set out very clearly the distinctive nature of St. Mark’s as a Church of England school. They have taken strategic management of the school’s self-evaluation as a church school and have fed targets into the school development plan. This is bringing about on-going improvements. All stakeholders have been involved to some extent in these developments, with parents, pupils and staff being questioned about their perception of this Christian school. The Vicar, who is also Chair of Governors, is instrumental in leading these developments along with the headteacher. He is well supported in this by members of St. Mark’s Church, some of whom are on the governing body or act as ‘Church Friends’ to each class. The Vicar and his curate give very good support to school worship, and have put together the morning prayers for classes to use. Parents appreciate the strong Christian ethos of the school and the community links with the parish church, and this is one of the main reasons they choose this school.