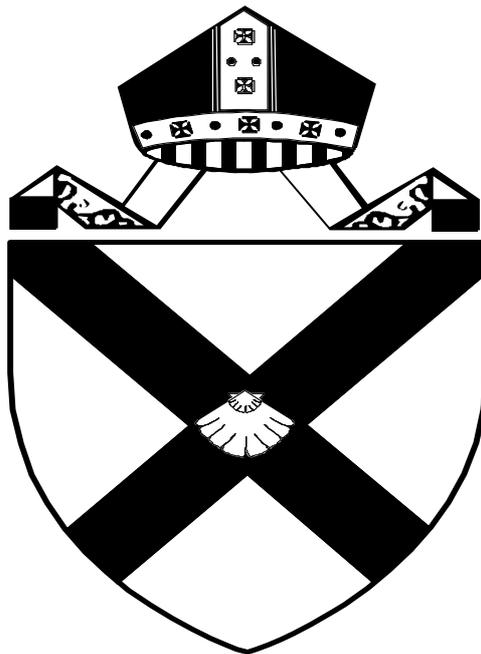


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2010



**St. George's Church of England
Humanities College**

Meadow Road, GRAVESEND, Kent DA11 7LS

Voluntary Aided

Unique Reference No:118876

Kent CC

Head Teacher: Mrs. Anne Southgate

Chairman of Governors: Rev. Joe King

Incumbent: Rev. Ruth Oates

Inspectors: Jan Thompson (92), John Viner (144)

Inspection: 7th, 11th January 2010

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

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

St. George's Church of England Humanities College in Gravesend is a good and improving Church school. **Overall Grade 2: GOOD**

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. George's Church of England Humanities College is a Voluntary Aided school in Gravesend for secondary age students. It is oversubscribed and has 1159 students. Thirty four percent of students are from practising Anglican backgrounds and 25 percent are from other world religions, mainly Sikhism. The school operates in a selective area with ten grammar schools within a ten mile radius. Consequently standards on entry are below average. Students make satisfactory progress overall. The head teacher has been in post for just one year, but prior to this was acting head and deputy head teacher. The school is due to have a new building soon.

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- The clearly defined Christian values that underpin the whole life of the school.
- Use of St. Mary's Church for regular worship by school groups.
- The contribution of Religious Education (RE) to the respect shown for people of different religions and beliefs.
- The outstanding Christian leadership of the new head teacher, well supported by the Governing Body.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- All daily Collective Worship should be recognisably Christian worship. (This was a Focus for Development in the last report.)
- In planning the new school building with a chapel area, the governing body should revisit the possibility of appointing a chaplain.
- The governing body should consider the introduction of some discrete teaching about Christianity in Years 7 and 8.
- Policy statements for RE and Worship should give adequate information about practice. (This was a Focus for Development in the last report.)

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? GRADE1: OUTSTANDING

St George's is a very inclusive school. Its mission statement, 'All Different, All Equal', is known to all stakeholders and lies at the heart of its work. The school has identified the Christian values of service and compassion, thankfulness and hope, and respect for the earth as God's creation as those which underpin this statement. There is a shared understanding of governors, staff and students that a Christian school should be engaged in the service of others and that it should result in good relationships between and among adults and learners. The re-organisation of the school into vertically grouped Communities has very effectively raised the quality of mutual care and concern. This is seen, for example, in a Princess Diana award won by older students for the support system they have established for students in Year 7. Students of all faiths and of none are affirmed by the school's Christian character and each knows that they matter as an individual. Worship and RE make a significant contribution to students' spiritual and moral development. The school also makes good use of its environment to support learners' spiritual development. For example, the mission statement is clearly displayed, along with the Bible passages that provide its basis. Many vibrant displays show how students put Christian love into action by supporting charities. Christian signs and symbols proclaim the school's distinctive identity. Older students commented that the values they had learned at St George's had given them a secure foundation for their future lives.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community? GRADE 3: SATISFACTORY

At the last inspection the school was asked to ensure that all daily Collective Worship, wherever it takes place, is recognisably Christian worship. It was also asked to support tutor group worship and to review its worship policy statement. Although the simple change of ensuring that worship was called 'worship' and not 'assembly' took place immediately, little else has been done until recently. Over the past months, the newly appointed Faith Ethos leader has taken robust and effective steps to ensure that tutor-led worship is of good quality. She has produced good PowerPoint resources and put in place support and training for tutors who are less confident in leading worship. Students say that these acts of worship are generally special times when they can get to grips with big questions in smaller and more personal groups than in the hall or church. The worship policy statement, however, remains uninformative about practice and makes no mention of God. Students are positive about worship and say that it helps them to learn things about Christianity. Many take up the opportunity to lead acts of worship. Some worship is very moving, especially when well-chosen images are mixed with appropriate music. Students say that the recently introduced Prayer Tree, for which they can email prayer concerns, is helping them to understand the importance and relevance of prayer. However, they are unclear about the divine purpose of worship and therefore the school is not a worshipping community in the fullest sense. Even in church, few opportunities are taken to worship in song and there is little liturgical structure. Worship is carefully planned and its evaluation is excellent. It is organised so that each Community experiences a weekly act of worship in the school hall and in the church. They also have two tutor-led acts of worship and one day when students choose ways to develop their skills for the good of others. For most students, this day does not fulfil policy requirements that daily worship should be 'in accordance with the teaching of the Church of England.' Nor is the tutor-led worship distinctively Anglican, although worship themes often follow the Church's calendar. Also, the school dedicates a week's Collective Worship each year to helping students understand the Eucharist, with a whole-school celebration of this central sacrament of the Church of England.

How effective is Religious Education? GRADE 2: GOOD

Students make good progress in Religious Education (RE) across the school and standards have improved since the last inspection. All students follow a Short Course GCSE in Years 9 and 10 and the 2009 Year 10 results were exceptionally good at 87% A*-C. The majority of students go on to take the Full Course in Year 11 and 81% achieved A*-C in 2009, which is better than the national average. However, there is a core of students who do not do well and the school is looking into introducing the Entry Level Qualification for such students. RE is popular and about 20 students a year take it at examination level in the Sixth Form. All those who took Advanced Level (AL) in 2009 passed and three quarters gained A-C grades. A third of these AL students achieved their best grades in this subject. The school has gained specialist status in Humanities since the last inspection, with RE as the lead subject. RE is integrated with History and Geography in Years 7 and 8 and taught through Project Based Learning, which is popular with the students. This is now under the direction of the Head of RE, who has strengthened some of the RE aspects. She has also improved assessment practices so that students now have clear guidance on their target levels. However, students do not do any in depth study of Christianity until their GCSE course in Year 9, when they also study Sikhism as the other major religion in Gravesend. Teaching is mostly good, with a range of interesting activities and good resources, many of which are purpose made in school. Most pupils like the subject, respond well in class and behave well. They develop a range of thinking skills and are able to express their own views and to support these with well considered reasons. The head teacher and chair of governors, in particular, are very supportive of RE, and all three RE specialists have recently been promoted. The Sixth Form RE days (three times a year) are now well established, with an emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. RE reinforces the school's ethos of respect for religions and students talk openly about beliefs.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school? GRADE 2: GOOD

The new head teacher is very committed to the church foundation of St George's and has given it her best attention since being in post in the last year. Her position is clearly seen in her welcome to prospective parents in the school's prospectus and on their website, which leaves readers in no doubt of the Christian purpose of the school. She has also appointed a very committed 'Faith Ethos' leader from the RE department who is effective in monitoring and supporting worship. These have led the self-evaluation as a church school, involving students in surveys and fully involving the governing body in decisions. Prior to this, however, leadership and management suffered two difficult years because of the personal situation of the previous headteacher, leading to her bereavement and unexpected resignation. Consequently, the school did not respond to all recommendations in the last report at the time and did not pursue their intention to appoint a school chaplain. Staff and students are now aware of the greater emphasis on the church aspects of the school, one student saying: "Everyone is scared of change, but when it's a good change it really makes a difference." The school has done more than most in succession planning, including hosting a diocesan conference on this and encouraging prospective leaders of church schools from its own workforce. There is a good, historic partnership with St. Mary's Church, which is situated next to the school and is used on a daily basis by school groups for Collective Worship. The Vicar is a member of the governing body and is very supportive of the worship of the school. The school makes good use of Diocesan support and holds its annual prize giving ceremony in the cathedral.