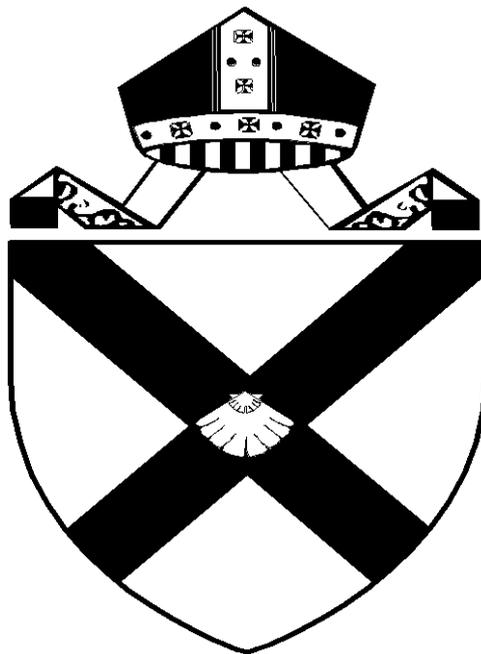


# STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

## ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2012



**St. Helen's  
Church of England Primary School  
Voluntary Controlled**

Church Street, Cliffe, Rochester, Kent ME3 7PU  
Medway LA

Unique Reference No: 118641  
Head Teacher: Mrs. Vivienne Barr  
Chair of Governors: Mr. Peter Bonner  
Incumbent: Rev. Edward Wright  
Inspector: Ms Jan Thompson (NS 92)  
Inspection: 1 March 2012

## *National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report*

### **St Helen's, Cliffe Voluntary Controlled CE Primary School**

Church Street, Cliffe, Rochester ME3 7PU

**Diocese: Rochester**

Local authority: Medway

Date of inspection: 1 March 2012

Date of last inspection: 1-2 December 2008

School's unique reference number: 118641

Headteacher: Vivienne Barr

Inspector's name and number: Jan Thompson No 92

#### **School context**

St. Helen's CE Primary School is situated in the Kent village of Cliffe, near Rochester. Its 199 pupils are mostly White British, drawn from Cliffe and the surrounding rural area, and come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. About 15% attend church regularly. Ofsted judged the school to be satisfactory overall, commenting on good behaviour and positive relationships.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St.Helen's CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding.**

St. Helen's Church of England Primary School has embedded and developed all that was good at the last inspection and is now an outstanding Church school.

#### **Established strengths**

- Clearly defined Christian values support all aspects of school life.
- High quality collective worship promotes the spiritual development of pupils and staff.
- Staff and pupils are respectful of faith and prepared to talk openly about it.
- Leaders and managers are united in their commitment to this church school.
- Very effective community links exist between school and church.

#### **Focus for development**

Follow through the school's plans to:

- develop a spiritual garden;
- enable pupils to take more of a leadership role in collective worship;
- promote the school's Church status when the new website is developed;
- make better use of level descriptions in Religious Education (RE).

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

The school has identified seven core Christian values, which include 'forgiveness' and 'trust'. These underpin the whole life of the school and are taught and reinforced in many ways. For example, the value of 'endurance' is a theme for collective worship during Lent. In the RE lessons seen during the inspection, the theme of 'creation' and caring for God's world was being explored in Year 2 and 'friendship' in Year 4. Pupils are encouraged to think about the practical application of Christian values at school, at home, in the community and in the wider world. This is done by linking them with their 'Golden Rules.' Pupils support a variety of charities and know that they are following Jesus' example in helping others. The value of 'service' is emphasized and is seen in the help older pupils give to younger ones, for example in being their walking partners on visits to the church. Older pupils are also trained to be peer mediators, to bring 'peace' by listening to lunchtime disagreements and discussing a peaceful resolution. The school is a happy, friendly community where relationships are very good at all levels. The school motto, which came from the pupils, is 'Playing together, learning together, growing together.' The pupil who suggested 'growing together' explained it as growing closer to God and this is now encapsulated in the school prayer in the words 'Dear God ... Help us

learn and play together, and grow to be your friend for ever.’ Excellent use is made of the school environment to support pupils’ spiritual development. Reception pupils have a decorated wooden shed in their outside area which they use for quiet reflection and looking at Christian books. All classes have interesting, interactive prayer stations which pupils enjoy using. At the pupils’ request, the reflective area in the entrance corridor has been moved to the hall as a focus for worship. Pupils leave prayers in the box there, to be used in collective worship. There are plans to develop a spiritual garden for quiet reflection.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.**

Pupils across the age range are very positive about all aspects of worship and engage with it very well. The inspection took place on World Book Day, which the school used to celebrate the Bible as the most popular book in the world. Many pupils and staff were in costume, including the headteacher who led the act of worship. She dressed as Gideon and told his story with humour and much pupil participation. Pupils also enjoyed the singing, including leading out to the song ‘This is the day that the Lord has made.’ Pupils appreciate the different times in the day that they worship at school. They say that it helps them to ‘get closer to God’ and to ‘have more faith in God.’ They also find worship helpful in their lives. For example, one pupil said, ‘God encourages me’ and another ‘He helps me to be a better person and to say sorry.’ Staff too speak about the value of collective worship in terms of ‘growing together’ as a Christian community. They also appreciate the ‘time to be at peace with oneself and with God.’ Worship is suitably Anglican, with some responses and use of liturgical colours in a display. It follows the seasons and festivals of the Church’s year, with some major festivals celebrated at St. Helen’s Church. The school celebrates Pentecost in school, with different prayer stations and balloons for this the birthday of the Church. Pupils are involved in evaluating worship, as recommended at the last inspection. This has helped them to articulate better what they get out of worship and to be involved in improving it.

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

The headteacher, the staff and the governing body are committed to this school as a church school, with particular governor support from the chair, the Rector and the two Foundation Governors. A Values and Vision day in April 2011 was very successful in moving the school forward in terms of its distinctive Christian character. By including staff and governors, this day addressed the need identified at the last inspection to involve the whole governing body in the self-evaluation and improvement of the church aspects of the school. It identified the school’s core Christian values, which are now central to every aspect of the school’s life and which pupils linked to their Golden Rules. One parent said, ‘There is evidence of these values wherever you go in the school.’ The school’s self-evaluation form as a church school was exemplary, evidencing the growing impact being made on staff and pupils who are now more ready to embrace and to talk openly about faith. The values and vision focus has also helped the school to promote its Christian character better in its prospectus, which was also an issue at the last inspection. A new website has yet to be developed. A particular strength is the effective links between the school, St Helen’s Church and Cliffe Christian Mission. The churches run Kingsquad in school for older pupils and Puppets and Praise for younger ones. This link encourages pupils to attend church, including ‘Messy Church’ which is run once a month on a Saturday afternoon and All-Age worship every Sunday, as well as special Sunday services such as Education Sunday. There are also occasions when the whole school attends St Helen’s Church. For example, the school gave a large tree for the Christmas Tree Festival and decorated it with their prayers. RE is well managed and makes a significant contribution to pupils’ spiritual and moral development, as well as helping them to understand different religions.