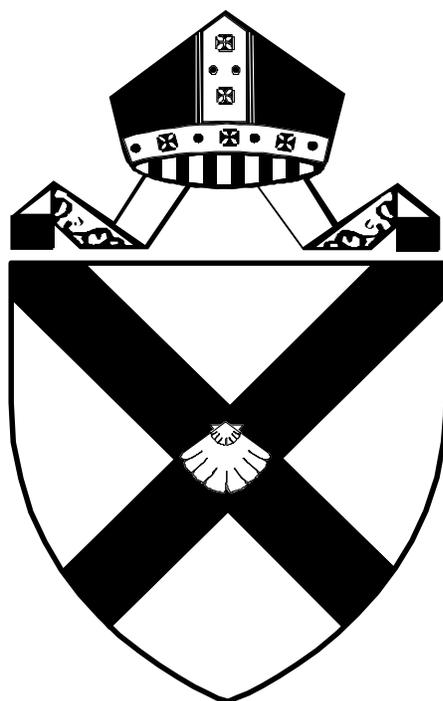


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2011



St James's Primary School
Voluntary Aided

High Street, Isle of Grain, Rochester Kent ME3 0BS
Kent LA

Unique Reference No: 118729

Acting Head Teacher (LA representative):

Ms Julia Gaughan

Chair of Governors: Mrs. Marilyn Elmes

Incumbent: vacancy

Inspector: Mr. John Viner (NS144)

Inspection: 11 January 2011

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

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

Overall, St James's Church of England Primary School in Grain is a satisfactory church school although there are some significant areas of weakness.

GRADE 3: SATISFACTORY

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St James' Church of England Primary School is a one-form entry Voluntary Aided school serving the small and relatively isolated community of Grain, at the eastern end of the Hoo Peninsula. The school was founded in 1864. Its substantial 1970s building has recently been modernised and extended. The school's 158 pupils are drawn from the immediate area and are of almost entirely White British heritage. Attainment on entry is lower than average and a higher than average number of pupils has special educational needs or disabilities. The school is in challenging circumstances; the headteacher has recently resigned and the church does not currently have an incumbent. The recent Ofsted inspection placed the school in special measures. There is currently an acting advisory headteacher on secondment from the Local Authority.

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- There are positive relationships between and among adults, reflecting the Christian values that underpin the school.
- Collective Worship gives pupils a good experience of Anglican tradition and practice.
- Pupils enjoy RE and have a sound understanding of Christianity.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Develop and extend the scope of the Church School working group to include a wider range of stakeholders so that it can make a better contribution to the school's overall self-evaluation.
- Improve teaching in RE so that it engages pupils better, is pitched at the appropriate level and is accurately assessed.
- Share responsibility for some acts of worship so that a wider range of leaders can be involved.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to engage in personal reflection and prayer.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? GRADE 3: SATISFACTORY

This school is founded on the Christian values of respect and responsibility and proclaims that it promotes the teachings of Jesus. These values are not made as explicit as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, they are seen in the positive relationships between and among adults and learners, the spirit of co-operation that is evident in the daily life of the school and in the sound promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave well and, although some say that there are those whose behaviour worries them, they trust most of the adults to deal with their problems quickly and effectively. Through the sound Christian foundations that the school provides, pupils begin to appreciate that they are part of a global community and have some responsibilities to help others, for example through their support of charities. The school makes limited use of the environment to promote pupils' spiritual development. There are displays in each classroom that are linked to Religious Education (RE), but they do not provide the opportunities for pupils to engage in personal reflection and prayer that were noted at the last inspection. The seasonal Christian display in the entrance hall is of good quality but pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to use the nearby prayer box and they say that they do not do so.

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?

GRADE 3: SATISFACTORY

Collective worship is an important part of daily school life and pupils know that it is a special time. They behave reverently and listen attentively. Pupils say that they enjoy worship, especially when they can take part, and they enjoy singing and celebrating their work. They like the variety of visitors who lead worship and say that worship sometimes makes them think about the needs of others. The school continues to plan worship effectively, but the recommendation at the last inspection to include pupils in evaluating worship has not taken place. Parents say that they like to attend the termly acts of worship that are presented by their child's class. Pupils' experience of Anglican tradition and practice is good. Each act of worship begins with the lighting of a candle and the repetition of a response, and the nearby church building is currently used six times a year. Pupils know many prayers and songs by heart. Prayer takes place in all classes, either at lunchtime or at the end of the day and sometimes both. A limited number of senior staff lead worship because some do not want to lead prayers. This reduces pupils' opportunities to see these staff in the context of their school's Christian character. In the absence of a Vicar, worship is well supported by the neighbouring parish Reader, who is also a Foundation Governor. She also helps to prepare for the school's annual involvement in the Church Schools Festival at the Cathedral, when the reflective and moving quality of pupils' prayers has been noted.

How effective is Religious Education? GRADE 3: SATISFACTORY

Although pupils make progress in Religious Education (RE), it is limited by pedestrian teaching which results in low standards. These standards are in line with other subjects. Pupils' understanding of Christian faith and practice is sound and developing well. However, their knowledge of other faiths is superficial so, when teachers attempt to draw parallels with Christianity, the comparison is lost and pupils can become confused. Pupils enjoy RE and say that they would like to know more about other faiths. They demonstrate openness and respect when talking about the things they believe. They understand that RE has a special place in a Church School and that it helps them to appreciate that they are part of a diverse world. The recent resignation of the headteacher has left the school struggling to fulfil the leadership role that she took in RE. As a result, although the new subject leader is co-ordinating planning and resources well, she lacks subject expertise and so has not been able to monitor or make strategic improvements. The parish Reader/ Foundation Governor is giving her moral and practical support. The diocesan RE syllabus provides a secure basis for teachers' planning and the school borrows diocesan resources to support teaching. Teachers make use of the assessment foci that the syllabus suggests but, because lessons are not always pitched to pupils' abilities, they are not always used effectively.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church school?

GRADE 3: SATISFACTORY

The school is operating under difficult circumstances and its leaders and governors are now working hard to secure improvements. The school had identified some time ago that it needs to do more to make its Christian and Anglican distinctiveness clearer to parents, and this remains the case. Foundation governors have maintained a Christian vision for the school and have established a working party to evaluate its Christian character. However, the scope and membership of the group is too limited and this reduces its impact on the whole-school evaluation that is an essential component in its improvement. Thanks to the sustained work and support of the Foundation governors, adults and pupils continue to recognise the impact of Christian values on attitudes and behaviour. Hitherto governors had not paid enough attention to securing the continuation of the school's Christian character. This is no longer the case and they are aware of the need to bear this in mind, both in the appointment of a new headteacher and the future development of staff. Despite the current absence of a parish priest, there is a sound and continuing relationship with the parish church and with the other local Anglican churches on the Peninsula. The support of clergy and lay staff is of considerable benefit to the school.