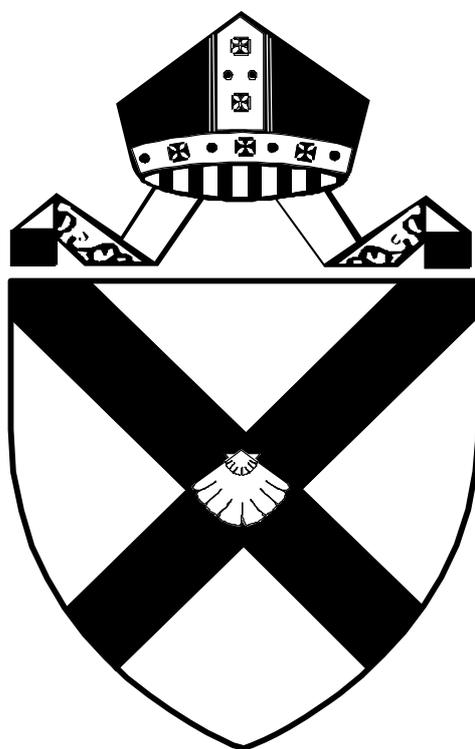


# STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

## ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2009



**St.John's Church of England  
Voluntary Controlled Infants School**

4 New Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 6RH  
Medway LA

Unique Reference No: 118640  
Headteacher: Mrs. Diana Keating  
Chair of Governors: Cllr. James Wyper  
Incumbent: Revd. Brian Adams  
Inspector: Mr. John Viner NS No.144  
Inspection: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009

## SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

### **How distinctive and effective is the school as a church school?**

St. John's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Infants School in Chatham is an outstanding church school.

**Grade 1: OUTSTANDING**

### **SCHOOL CONTEXT**

St John's Church of England Infants School is a small Voluntary Controlled school of 75 pupils. It is located close to the centre of Chatham and is in the ecumenical parish of St John. It is housed in substantial Victorian buildings that have been extended and modernised. Pupils are drawn from the local area and around half come from ethnic minority backgrounds, the largest group of which are Bangladeshi Muslims. Standards when pupils leave the school are in line with the national average. Ofsted judges the school's overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. The Local Authority has recently decided to close the school and, at the time of the inspection, its future was in doubt.

### **ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS**

- The clear strategic Christian vision of the headteacher and foundation governors.
- The centrality of worship to the life of the school and the way pupils learn about the importance of prayer.
- The outstanding partnership with the parish church.
- The good contribution made by Religious Education (RE) to the school's Christian distinctiveness

### **FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- Better prepare Foundation Governors for planning the school's future leadership.
- Increase opportunities for older pupils to participate in collective worship.

### **How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? Grade 1: OUTSTANDING**

Christian values provide a foundation for the school and are evident in all aspects of its work. They can be seen in the school's policies, through the curriculum and in the quality of the relationships between and among adults and learners. Parents remark on the caring family atmosphere and value the way the school gives their children confidence to move onto the next stage in their education. One parent commented that the school will "provide the members of society that Medway needs, with pride, manners and Christian values". Prayer is important in the school day and pupils know by heart the prayers used at lunchtime and at the end of each day. Since the last inspection the school has taken steps to increase the opportunities for pupils to make their own private prayers through the very good prayer boards that are a feature of every classroom and the thank-you prayers in the quiet garden. RE makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual development because it is given an important place in the curriculum and reminds pupils that the school places God at the heart of its work. Pupils of all faiths and none learn a lot about religion and know many Christian stories.

### **What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community? Grade 2: GOOD**

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. It takes place each day in the school hall and is attended by all pupils and teachers. The lit candle and the use of an introductory response sets worship apart from other times in the school day and gives it an Anglican character. Pupils enter the hall to quiet music and most sit quietly and attentively. They join in with prayers and sing enthusiastically. Worship is carefully planned around a programme of recurring themes and a good record is kept, which helps future planning. Care is also taken to evaluate worship and this includes listening to pupils' views and sometimes acting on them to bring about improvements, such as the introduction of quiet, reflective music. All teachers take turns to lead worship and the youth worker from Emmaus Church visits weekly. Pupils enjoy worship, especially listening to stories and singing, although they would like more opportunities to join in. They especially like the times when worship is led by the parish youth worker. Pupils of all faiths and of none are affirmed by worship and none is withdrawn. At Christmas, Easter and at the end of the school year worship takes place at the church. Pupils enjoy these visits and their parents say they enjoy attending to see the delight on their children's faces.

### **How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school? Grade 1: OUTSTANDING**

The headteacher articulates a clear and ambitious Christian vision for the school that is shared by key staff and communicated to all stakeholders. Their Christian commitment and security is sustaining them in a time of uncertainty, when they are faced with the local authority's decision to close the school. The majority of governors, whether or not they are Foundation appointments, have an active association with the parish church and, since the last inspection, have enthusiastically taken responsibility for the evaluation and promotion of the school's Christian aspects. Governors now need further training in appointing staff, should the school remain open. It is made clear to parents from the outset that this is a Church school. Whilst only a minority choose to admit their child for this reason, many understand the leadership's commitment to its distinctiveness and most speak warmly of the three services that are held in church. These are well attended by parents of all faiths and of none. There is a strong partnership with the ecumenical parish church and the close relationship between school and church provides excellent pastoral support for all pupils and their families. The 'church on the gate', when parents have access to church representatives at the end of each school day is an example of outstanding practice. The parish youth worker visits the school frequently while the incumbent provides chaplaincy to the headteacher and the whole staff. The parish staff are leading many aspects of the school's fight to remain open. Parents, of all faiths and none, appreciate this partnership which makes the school a beacon of hope in the community that it serves.