

St Lawrence Church of England Primary School

Church Road
Stone Street
Sevenoaks
TN15 0LN

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent
Date of inspection: 18th June 2012
Date of last inspection: 1st-2nd October 2007
School's unique reference number: 118704
Headteacher: Alison Saunders
Inspector's name and number: Richard Tyson
Quality assurance: Lyn Field (NS: 151)

School context

St Lawrence is a Voluntary Controlled (VC) Church of England Primary School situated in the hamlet of Stone Street, near Sevenoaks. The school was built in 1868 and is adjacent to St. Lawrence church. A new extension to the school building was completed earlier this year. The school has continued to grow in recent years with eighty two students currently on roll. Students attend from local villages and Sevenoaks, with the school currently oversubscribed. The school has a higher than average proportion of students with special educational needs.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Lawrence school as a Church of England school are outstanding.

St Lawrence was judged as outstanding in the last inspection. It is still outstanding as it has continued to make progress since then in strengthening its distinctive Christian character and in developing collective worship innovatively. Christian values are an integral part of everything the school does. The school is successful in its mission to 'let the light of every child shine'.

Established strengths

- The very clear Christian character that underpins all aspects of the school's work
- The vibrant and engaging collective worship
- The committed, passionate and visionary Christian leadership of the headteacher

Focus for development

- To identify and explore the school's explicit Christian values
- To plan and monitor the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in relation to the school's Christian values.
- To improve systems for monitoring the impact of professional development of staff

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

Through a combination of work in the classroom, collective worship and the extra-curricular life of the school, the pupils know they attend a distinctively Christian school. At St Lawrence School the development of the 'whole' child is seen as extremely important. Guided by clear Christian teaching, each child is nurtured and valued to achieve their full potential. The school has recently begun to engage more explicitly with specific Christian values. As a result analysis of how students develop in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in a Church School is limited. All know, however, that they are part of a Christian learning community grounded in love and care. The result is confident and well informed pupils ready to make a contribution to society. The school motto, school documentation, the website and the high quality display all contribute towards this distinctive Christian ethos. As one pupil remarked in commenting on the school motto, 'Jesus is the light of the world. He shines all of

the time. The school wants us to shine like that.' Since the last inspection report, the school has regularised the use of the Rochester Diocesan Religious Education (RE) Syllabus. This has been a key factor in helping pupils think more deeply and independently. Such independent thinking is indicative of the good learning in RE at the school. For example, in one RE lesson outstanding questioning on the Christian underpinning of the school motto helped pupils think at a higher level. This is a school in which Christianity is firmly rooted. Consequently it is one in which all can freely think and practise as a Christian community without fear of ridicule. For example, this is achieved through the excellent use of public and private prayer boxes in classrooms and the spontaneous contributions to collective worship. The Christian ethos of the school permeates every aspect of the school's work and is made to have real and relevant applications to the lives of all students. For example, reflecting on the fund raising undertaken in support of St Lawrence's Ghanaian partner school a student said, 'God likes people to give generously.' A parent remarked, 'Christianity permeates through everything the school does; it is part of the landscape here.' The conduct of all during this inspection reflected this.

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

The collective worship life of the school is vibrant, interactive and creative. For example, many pupils and members of staff referred to how much they enjoyed and learnt from such worship at Easter and Pentecost. Worship at Easter is an example of outstanding practice as the precise interactive format and focus is different each year. With its clear structure and careful, imaginative planning, worship engages pupils. This helps them to grow in understanding and as spiritual beings. Underpinning this is the headteacher's understanding and use of different worship styles to keep pupils engaged. Worship helps to inspire pupils and gives them Christian insights that equip them in their day to day lives. Pupils have an outstanding range of opportunities to plan and lead aspects of worship in day to day worship as well as specific occasions such as the Leavers' Service. Pupils are comfortable and confident in doing so and are keen to participate in the worship life of the school. A striking example of outstanding practice is the spontaneous willingness of pupils to pray for others and to sing the school blessing. The way in which pupil leadership is being developed through the appointment of worship prefects reflects the thoughtful way in which the school helps pupils consider their own calling in the Christian life of the school. The worship life of the school is clearly linked to all the Christian festivals and seasons and reflects the Anglican tradition. The different versions used of the Lord's Prayer are a good example of this. The relationship with the incumbent is very strong and makes a significant contribution to the quality of worship in the school. Collective worship is planned and effectively evaluated on a regular, informal basis. This leads to improvements in the quality of collective worship.

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

The headteacher has a clear Christian vision which is understood and well supported by staff, parents, the incumbent, governors and pupils. All are empowered and encouraged to play a role in developing the vision and practice of the school. All are consulted routinely. A particular strength of the school is the way in which these different stakeholders, especially governors, shape and support its Christian ethos. The way in which the teaching of RE has been addressed since the last inspection with the strong support of parents is an example of outstanding practice. Through the very strong and mutually supportive relationships with St Lawrence Church, other non-Anglican local churches and St James' Anglican school in Ghana there are very effective partnerships between the school, church and wider community. The latter link is an outstanding example of how Anglican schools can work collaboratively and learn together across international boundaries for the mutual benefit of all. The school routinely evaluates its work as a Church school with areas of development clearly stated in the school strategic plan. Staff regularly attend training to help develop the Christian ethos of the school. This has begun to make a clear impact on sustaining improvements in the Christian life of the school, for example, with the introduction of 'Godly play' and interactive Easter worship. Nonetheless, current systems for evaluating the impact of professional development do not always highlight what has worked well or where further work is necessary. The headteacher successfully uses her expertise as a Church school leader to support the improvement of other Church schools.