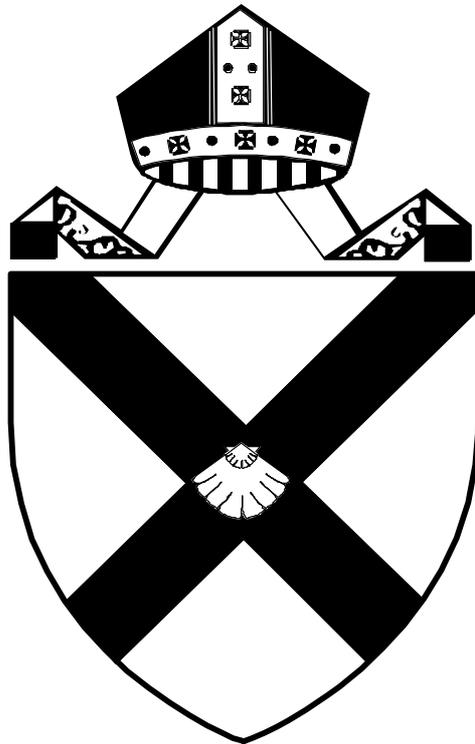


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2011



**St Mary's Island Church of England
Primary School**

Island Way West, St Mary's Island, Chatham
Kent ME4 3ST

Voluntary Aided

Unique Reference No:132056
Medway LA

Head Teacher: Mrs.Sharon Day
Chairman of Governors: Mr Kevin Goad
Incumbent: Revd Peter Guinness
Inspector: Mr John Viner (NS144)
Inspection: 8 February 2011

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

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

St Mary's Island Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a good Church school with many outstanding features.

GRADE 2: GOOD

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mary's Island Church of England Primary School opened with a single form of entry in 1999 on St Mary's Island as part of the Chatham Maritime regeneration project. Since then it has expanded to its present two forms of entry. It is a popular and oversubscribed school, drawing half of its 408 pupils from the island and the remainder from the surrounding area. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage while a small but growing proportion are from ethnic minorities. A small number of pupils are of other faiths. A lower than average percentage of pupils have special educational needs or disabilities. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are average and Ofsted has recently judged the school's effectiveness to be satisfactory. The school also serves as St Mary's Island Church, an ecumenical church serving the island community. Around 25% of pupils attend this or one of the other local churches.

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- Christian values underpin the school and are visible in every aspect of its work.
- Prayer is embedded in the school and enriches pupils' spiritual growth.
- Pupils enjoy Religious Education very much and say that teachers make it fun.
- The seamless relationship between the school and the Island Church benefits pupils and enriches the community.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a system for the regular and effective evaluation of collective worship.
- Engage with a wide range of stakeholders in an evaluation of the specific Christian values the school promotes.

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

Christian values provide a firm foundation for every aspect of the school. Leaders and governors agree that Christian love is at the heart of the school's work. This is evident in the high quality of the relationships between and among adults and pupils, which result in excellent behaviour and mutual respect. Pupils are affirmed by the school's Christian character. They know their views and beliefs are recognised and valued and are confident in talking openly about them. This has a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of most pupils. Parents recognise and value the school's distinctiveness; over half of the parents choosing St Mary's Island give this as the reason. Pupils develop a genuine sense of compassion for other people that often leads them to take action, such as fund-raising for good causes. The parish's associate vicar serves as the school's chaplain. This excellent provision underlines the importance that is given to nurturing the spiritual development of all pupils, irrespective of faith. Excellent use is made of the school environment to proclaim its Christian character. The corridors contain many good displays focused on the Christian faith and there is a prayer tree that pupils delight to use, knowing that their prayers will be used by the church. The tree theme is continued in classrooms where reflection areas provide good opportunities to reflect and pray. The school's distinctive Christian character enriches pupils' experience and helps to build a strong foundation for their lives.

What is the impact of collective worship on the school community? GRADE 2: GOOD

Collective worship is central to the school. Pupils and adults are affirmed by it and understand that it is a special part of each day. Pupils respond positively with reverent and attentive behaviour. They say that they enjoy worship, especially when they can play an active part. Pupils develop good levels of spiritual maturity and become confident worshippers. However, the school's use of the term 'assembly' limits their appreciation of the spiritual nature of worship. Prayer is woven throughout the school: pupils pray at lunchtimes and at the end of school as well as daily Collective Worship. The daily morning prayers for staff underline the importance of prayer to school life. Worship is carefully planned around a series of themes and is led by the headteacher, staff, chaplain, members of the Island Church and visitors. This variety helps to keep worship fresh and interesting. Since the last inspection, worship themes include Pentecost. Another improvement is the introduction of separate weekly acts of worship for older and younger pupils so that they experience worship in a more personal and relevant way. The suggested school Eucharist has not yet been introduced but pupils experience it in the cathedral, at the annual Church Schools Festival. However, there is no system for the evaluation of worship, which limits planned developments. Pupils have a good understanding of Anglican traditions and practices, through the use of a cross and candles as a focus for worship, regular use of the Lord's Prayer and the good use of liturgical responses. Parents say they welcome the chance to attend worship when it is led by their child's class. They also attend seasonal church services in good numbers.

How effective is Religious Education? GRADE 2: GOOD

Religious Education (RE) has an important place in the school's curriculum where it has the status of a core subject. Pupils attain average standards and make expected progress. These standards are in line with the other core subjects. The last inspection reported several weaknesses in RE and, since then, the school has acted decisively to bring about the necessary improvements. By adopting the diocesan RE syllabus the school has provided teachers with consistently good lesson planning, with a clear focus on assessment. As a result teachers can concentrate on the learning and progress their pupils make. The new subject leader is knowledgeable, experienced and understands the strengths and weaknesses of RE. She has improved monitoring and is leading developments enthusiastically. She is well-supported by diocesan advisers. Teaching varies in quality but some of it, including the lessons seen during the inspection, is outstanding. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about RE and say that teachers make learning fun. The best teaching is creative and exciting and sometimes leads to times of deep reflection and discussion, when pupils share their beliefs. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of Christian belief and practice. Although they develop a respect for the beliefs of others, their learning about other faiths is less secure.

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

Leaders and governors share a Christian vision for the school, based on mutual care, which is seen in the way that the whole school community promotes its Christian identity. Governors say that the school is 'a community of love' and this view is echoed by many parents. Since the last inspection there have been important improvements in the way that the school evaluates itself as a church school. Key to this has been the establishment of a Foundation Committee of the Governors. Although staff, clergy and parents are represented on this committee as governors, the involvement of stakeholders is otherwise limited. Leaders and governors have not sufficiently identified those specific Christian values that underpin the school and this results in some lack of clarity among stakeholders about what the school considers of prime importance. For example, some parents say that the school does not make its Christian identity clear enough. Governors have a good understanding of the school's future leadership needs and the recent expansion of the senior team has added to this capacity. The seamless partnership with the church, including the outstanding support of the chaplain, benefits pupils and helps them to grow in confidence and to develop a spiritual grounding that will help them in the next stage of their learning.