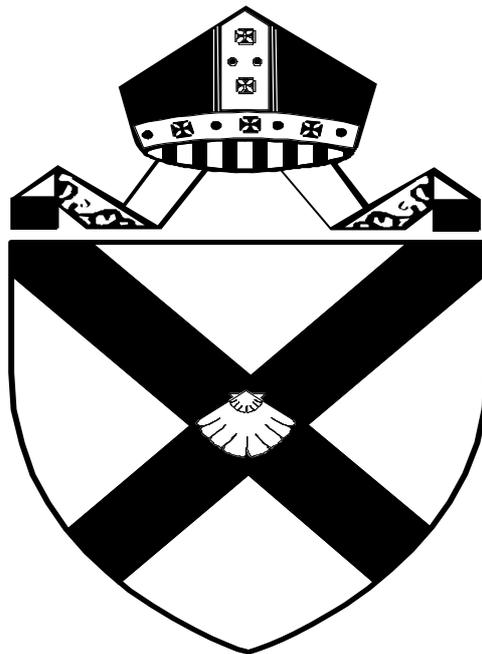


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2009



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

**St Mary's Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 7BU
Voluntary Aided**

Kent CC

Unique Reference No: 118754

Head Teacher: Mrs. Amanda McGarrigle

Chair of Governors/Incumbent: Fr. James Mowbray

Inspector: Ms Jan Thompson (NS 92)

Inspection: 26th November 2009

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

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

St. Mary's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School in Swanley is a good church school.

GRADE 2: GOOD

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Mary's Church of England Primary School is a Voluntary Aided school in the town of Swanley in Kent. It serves its local community, with nearly half of its 228 pupils coming from settled Gypsy Roma families. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. Ofsted judged the school to be good, with pupils making good progress to attain broadly average standards in English, maths and science by the end of Year 6. The school has a very good reputation and is oversubscribed. Some parents actively choose the school as a church school and about seventeen percent of pupils come from church families.

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- Its strong Christian ethos is fundamental to the life of the school.
- Christian worship makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development.
- Pupils enjoy Religious Education (RE) and make good progress.
- The Christian life of the school is particularly well supported by the Headteacher and Vicar.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Better use should be made of the school environment to promote pupils' spiritual development.
- There should be a stronger Anglican influence on daily Collective Worship.
- There should be more emphasis on Christianity in the RE syllabus.
- The whole Governing Body should take strategic responsibility for the church school self-evaluation process.

How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners? Grade 2: Good

This school is a joyful, welcoming Christian community that serves its neighbourhood very well. A Foundation Governor, who knows the school well as a parent and teaching assistant, described it as 'warm and loving', providing pupils with the care that they need. Pupils respond well to this encouragement with good behaviour and hard work, so that they make good progress. Relationships within the school are good at all levels and pupils learn to show respect and consideration for others. The Mission Statement expresses the strong Christian purpose of the school, which puts God first and teaches respect for others. This is seen in the spirituality of the school, focused on the weekly school Mass. It is lived out in the moral and social development of pupils, which is particularly well supported by RE. For instance, pupils consider religious teaching on care for the environment and the importance of rules for a stable society. Crucifixes around the school remind pupils of Christ, but not every classroom has a Christian display or area to encourage quiet reflection.

What is the impact of Collective Worship on the school community?

Grade 2: Good

Christian worship is at the heart of this school and centres on the weekly celebration of the Mass. Both adults and pupils value the worship life of the school. Pupils enjoy daily Collective Worship, engage with it well, and some would like to spend more time on it. Many staff, in addition to the teachers, choose to attend the weekly Mass. On the two days each week that the Headteacher leads worship, pupils are divided into three different age groups so that she can make it especially meaningful for them. Pupils like to be actively involved, and each class leads worship for the whole school three times a year. Pupils like calm music and times of reflection, although there is not always the opportunity for this. They have a good understanding of the importance of worshipping God and remembering that he is with us. They contribute prayers to be used in worship, through a school prayer box. Worship develops pupils' understanding of Anglican traditions and practices, particularly for Key Stage 2 pupils in the celebration of the Mass and for the whole school when they attend Mass in the church six times a year. The worship themes follow the Church calendar and include saints' days, so that pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of church festivals and practices. However, apart from the Mass for Key Stage 2 pupils, not all daily acts of worship make sufficient use of liturgical structure and Christian language, such as greetings and responses.

How effective is Religious Education? Grade 2: Good

The Governing Body reviewed the school's RE syllabus, as recommended in the last report, and adopted the Kent Agreed Syllabus in September 2008. This is now established and yielding some good results, although the percentage of time devoted to the study of Christianity is below that recommended by the Church of England. Pupils cover a lot of work and gain a good knowledge of religions. They make good progress across the school and achieve standards approaching average by the end of Year 6. Higher ability pupils in Years 5 and 6, however, are not challenged enough because insufficient attention is paid to the level descriptions when setting work. Lessons are planned with a good balance between learning about religions and relating what is learned to pupils' lives. This helps pupils to understand different beliefs and cultures, and encourages them to respect differences. It also contributes well to pupils' own spiritual and moral development. The subject is well led by two new part-time teachers, who each take responsibility for a key stage. They have good subject knowledge and teach most of the RE in the school in order to raise its status. Pupils respond very well to this subject and the interesting ways in which it is taught. Assessment of RE is now in place, which was also recommended at the last inspection. Assessment tasks six times a year help teachers and pupils to know how they are progressing.

How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school? Grade 2: Good

The Mission Statement proclaims Christ as 'the foundation and reason for the existence of St.Mary's Church of England School', and the church status of the school is made clear by the Headteacher to prospective parents. The school is well established in the area as a church school and more parents are specifically choosing it for this reason. The Headteacher and the Vicar are particularly committed to the school as a Church school, and the Vicar has recently become chair of governors. This reflects the strong links that have always existed with the parish church. The governing body is supportive, but has not yet been sufficiently involved in the school's self-evaluation as a church school. There are also three vacancies for church Foundation Governors. Many of the staff are church members and appreciate working in a church school and its distinctive nature.