

STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

ROCHESTER DIOCESE

2009



**St. Margaret's Church of England
Voluntary Controlled Junior School**
Orchard Street, RAINHAM, Kent ME8 9AE
Medway LA

Unique Reference No:118699
Headteacher: Mr. Paul Gabbett
Chair of Governors: Mrs. Julia Clarke
Incumbent: Canon Alan Vousden
Inspector: Ms Jan Thompson NS No.92
Inspection: 16th October 2009

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

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

St. Margaret's Church of England Junior School in Rainham has improved since its last inspection and is now an outstanding church school.

Grade 1: OUTSTANDING

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Margaret's is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England Junior School on the same site as St Margaret's Infant School, which is a Community School. It is a larger than average junior school, with 357 pupils drawn from the local area of Rainham. Pupils are mostly from White British families, about 20 % of whom are regular church members. Ofsted recorded that pupils' progress and attainment is satisfactory. They also commented that the school is particularly successful in supporting pupils' personal development and that spiritual development is 'outstanding.'

ESTABLISHED STRENGTHS

- The commitment of the headteacher and governing body to make this an outstanding church school.
- The excellent support of the parish church, particularly the influence of the youth worker.
- The enthusiasm of pupils for worship, demonstrated especially in their singing.
- The outstanding Christian spiritual and moral development of pupils.

FOCUS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Include withdrawal statements for Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship in the school prospectus.
- Rewrite the RE policy statement.

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

The Christian values of love, forgiveness, inclusion and personal worth are fundamental to the whole life of this school. Everyone is cared for because they are unique and valued in the eyes of God. This results in a 'family' feeling, where pupils are very happy and develop self-confidence, despite the large size of the school. Relationships are very good at all levels in the school, amongst both pupils and staff. Pupils' behaviour is very good and there is a recognition that we all make mistakes and deserve a fresh start when we have gone wrong. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is outstanding and is promoted well in both RE and Collective Worship. RE sets a good balance between helping pupils to learn about religions and also to relate it to their own lives. Time is always given to reflection in these lessons. The school has given pupils a good sense of moral and social responsibility. They are involved in local and global charitable projects and see this as their Christian duty to help others, following the example of Jesus. The school building is well used to support pupils' Christian education. As well as excellent RE displays, of particular note is the quiet religious music that plays in the hall from the moment the school is opened in the morning, and also the plasma screen displays with thoughts for the day and Bible passages. The spiritual areas in every classroom have differing degrees of impact, but a new interactive prayer wall in a corridor is being well used by pupils.

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

Grade 1: OUTSTANDING

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and is now attended by all teachers, which is an improvement on the last inspection. Pupils are very receptive to Collective Worship, entering the hall quietly and reverently and participating very well. A popular Worship Committee has been formed with pupils from Years 4 to 6. This was a direct outcome of monitoring pupils' response to Collective Worship since the last inspection, and helps them to feel more involved. Members have a say in choosing the worship themes and they take a lead in whole-school acts of worship. Collective Worship contributes very well to pupils' spiritual and moral development. They particularly appreciate the opportunity it gives them to pray to God and they sing with great enthusiasm. Parents say that their children talk about the assemblies at home and sing the songs. Pupils are given a good grounding in Anglican worship. The Vicar or Youth Worker leads worship in school once a week, and the school is welcomed to St Margaret's Church for its main festivals. Ascension Day is celebrated with a school Eucharist and a half-day holiday. Year 3 and Year 6 pupils also attend Rochester Cathedral annually for Church School Festivals, where Year 6 pupils contribute to a Eucharist service. All Collective Worship is framed in liturgy, using a candle and Anglican responses. Worship celebrates the main seasons and festivals of the Church's year and helps to develop pupils' knowledge of the Bible. The planning of worship is always thorough and creative. This was demonstrated at the time of the inspection by a wonderful celebration of Harvest Festival. It was a genuine act of worship in which all pupils were involved and was well attended by parents.

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

Grade 1: OUTSTANDING

The headteacher and governors are totally committed to improving this school as a church school. They have acted upon all the recommendations of the last inspection and have a strategy for continued development. They have a robust system of monitoring and evaluation in place, which involves all stakeholders and gives evidence of improvement. Parents are strongly supportive of the Christian education their children receive. For example, one parent said: "My son has learnt more about religion than I ever did at his age, which I think is a good thing." Another said that pupils are encouraged to be "secure in God's love." Before leaving last July, Year 6 pupils were asked how this church school had made a difference to them. Their responses included "It has made me closer to God" and "It has made me a better person." The headteacher has strengthened the relationship with the adjoining feeder infant school, which is a Community School. He has promoted senior management and encouraged senior leaders to consider training for headship in church schools. He has given good support to the 'reserved teacher' in charge of RE, with the result that the monitoring of this subject had improved since the last inspection. However, the RE policy statement is not sufficiently clear and parents' right to withdraw their children from RE and Collective Worship is not included in the prospectus. Staff are inducted well into the expectations of a church school but do not yet receive any teaching on Christian beliefs and practices, which would increase their effectiveness in RE and worship. There is strong mutual support between St Margaret's Church and the school. The role of the church youth worker is of particular note. He is involved in various ways with the Christian life of the school, and also forms a link for pupils between their primary and secondary schools. Highly gifted, he engages pupils exceptionally well and his enthusiasm is catching. One example is his setting up of 'Forte', a Year 6 choir of 26 boys, which contributes to worship on special occasions in school and in church and has won local awards. Relationships between the school and the Diocese are very good.