

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St Nicholas-at-Wade Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Down Barton Road
Birchington
Kent
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Diocese: Canterbury

Local authority: Kent
Dates of inspection: 5th February 2013
Date of last inspection: 21st May 2009
School's unique reference number: 118689
Acting Headteacher: John Asher
Chair of Governors: Dr Ross MacRae
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Anne-Marie Trustram 635

School context

St Nicholas-at-Wade is a one form entry primary school with 208 pupils on roll. It is situated on the edge of Thanet and admits pupils from Birchington and the surrounding villages. Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are well above the national average. In 2009 OfSTED graded the school as outstanding.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Nicholas-at-Wade Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

St Nicholas-at-Wade Church of England Primary School is a good church school. It provides a Christian environment where pupils' faith is nurtured through supportive relationships and in all aspects of the curriculum.

Established strengths

- The powerful contribution made by the school environment to the spiritual development of all pupils.
- The strong and supportive ethos which is based upon implicit Christian values.
- The excellent relationships between the school, the church and the local community.
- The effective leadership of the acting headteacher in promoting the distinctive Christian character of the school.

Focus for development

- To offer pupils the opportunity to develop a leadership role in collective worship.
- To ensure that the school's Christian values are explicitly taught and shared with all stakeholders.
- To strengthen the school self evaluation process by fully involving all stakeholders in regular planned reviews.

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

St Nicholas-at-Wade Church of England School is a place where every pupil is valued and nurtured as a unique child of God. The prospectus states, 'We know we are God's children and we try our best to show His love to everyone.' As one pupil said, 'We have hope, joy and peace in us.' The school environment contributes to pupils' spiritual development with Christian symbols displayed in the main entrance and throughout the classrooms and the main circulation areas. Prayer corners in the classroom are used on a daily basis for times of reflection. In RE, pupils are given opportunities to retell religious stories and to reflect on what they learn from religion. They are beginning to interpret these reflections and apply them to their own lives. Pupils speak positively about RE and demonstrate a secure knowledge of different religions. For example, in one lesson observed, pupils were able to

demonstrate a wide variety of knowledge and understanding of Jewish symbolism and traditions. The school's Christian ethos is excellent and consequently pupils are well cared for. As one parent said, 'All the teachers go the extra mile for the children.' The Christian character of the school has a major influence on pupils' desire to serve others. They are conscious of their role in a world where God values all human beings. They regularly fund raise for different charities including Send a cow to Africa, The Children's Society and Demelza House. Pupils know that their actions have an impact on others within the school community. They say that the teachings of Jesus help them to learn right from wrong and, 'We are one big team together'. The school's mission statement boldly promotes its Christian presence in the community by declaring, '(We) aim to promote a knowledge and understanding of the Christian religion and an appreciation of Christian values and faith.' The culture of mutual respect between staff and pupils exemplifies the Christian leadership the school has known over many years.

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

Collective worship is an important part of the school day and it has a positive impact on the life of the school. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their experiences of worship and they value the times of quiet reflection. Although pupils are used to regular adult led prayers as part of worship, they would like further opportunities to lead acts of worship themselves. As well as the daily act of worship, prayers are said before lunch and at the end of the school day. Pupils are encouraged to write their own prayers which are then placed in a class prayer book. The school promotes its Anglican status through the use of Anglican responses and the use of a candle to focus on the light of Christ. Pupils are able to internalise the themes explored in worship and subsequently articulate their understanding. As one said, '(The teachings of Jesus) help us to go through life with the stories He told.' The planning of worship is thorough and creative. The diocesan scheme is used with adaptations in accordance with the life of the school. Pupils are actively engaged through the use of multi sensory methods which meet the needs of all learning styles. In one act of worship, pupils were encouraged to examine the uniqueness of the veins in their hands. This led them to thinking about the symbolic act of placing their hands together to pray. Both parents and pupils value the spiritual support and guidance that they have received from the priest and the whole school community during a challenging bereavement. They were able to pose deep questions about faith and God's purpose for our lives within a secure and loving environment.

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

Staff and governors have a clear vision about the importance of distinctive Christian values in the life of the school. The values of respect, forgiveness, friendship and trust are implicit throughout the school. These now need to be made explicit to all stakeholders and during the induction process for new parents. The subject leader generously supports all staff with training which leads to high standards in RE. Community cohesion is seen as a collective responsibility and pupils are encouraged to take part in local church services and parish events. It is clear from parents' comments that they feel the nurturing environment of the school and the church enables their children to flourish as individuals with a developing faith. The areas for development from the previous inspection have largely been addressed. Pupils are now able to articulate the way in which Christian teaching impacts upon their lives and they are given opportunities to express individual prayer needs through the class prayer books. However, the process of self-evaluation has been not been systematically monitored. This is primarily due to the heavy administrative burden placed upon the leadership team. The school has acknowledged this deficiency. The current acting headteacher has exercised strong leadership by identifying the areas of development in order to take the school forward. Governors and the diocese have recently appointed a substantive head teacher. This is welcomed by the community at large and will be the start of a new and settled chapter in the life of the school.