

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Trottscliffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Lane,
Trottscliffe,
West Malling,
Kent
ME19 5EB

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Date of inspection: 27 February 2013

Date of last inspection: 6 October 2009

School's unique reference number: 118630

Headteacher: Elizabeth Stevens

Acting Chair of Governors: Anita Parkins

Incumbent: Rev. Dr. Linda Shuker

Inspector's name and number: Jan Thompson 92

School context

Trottscliffe Church of England Primary School is a small Voluntary Controlled school situated in a beautiful Kent village close to West Malling. It has 70 pupils on roll, eight of whom come from the village of Trottscliffe, with others travelling in from surrounding areas. Almost all are White British, with 11 per cent from Church families. The school has been led by an acting headteacher for most of the time since the last inspection. The new headteacher took over in January 2013. The rector is also new to her post since the last inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Trottscliffe CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Trottscliffe Church of England Primary School has made very good progress since its last inspection. It is now a good Church school with potential to improve further.

Established strengths

- The contribution of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship to pupils' spiritual development.
- Pupils' support for charities, motivated by Christian compassion.
- The strong links with the Church at parish and diocesan levels.

Focus for development

- Extend opportunities for pupils to monitor collective worship.
- Develop pupils' leadership roles in collective worship.
- Develop a quiet, outdoor area for spiritual reflection.

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

The school's prospectus claims that Trottscliffe 'is a small school with a big heart'. This sums up very well its caring, family nature, where older pupils show a kindly concern for the younger ones. The school has identified six core Christian values, focusing on peace at the time of the inspection. This featured prominently in displays and was promoted through RE and worship. Christian values support pupils' good behaviour and the very good relationships at all levels throughout the school. The Christian values of thankfulness and compassion have motivated pupils in their support for charities. For example, a recent RE unit on the inspiration of Jesus led the middle school class to raise money for Christian Aid. Pupils know that 'Jesus helped others and we should.' They have raised £400 through an 'own clothes

day' and a sponsored silence. RE and worship contribute very well to pupils' spiritual development. Critical thinking and reflection is encouraged right across the curriculum but is related to specifically religious and moral issues in RE. For example, pupils in a Year 5/6 RE lesson were considering if it is ever right to fight. The new headteacher has introduced the celebration of Church festival days through prayer activities in the church. This began recently with Ash Wednesday and proved very popular with the pupils. It contributes to pupils' good knowledge and understanding of Christianity. In response to the last inspection report, the school has used its environment much more effectively to promote pupils' spiritual development. There are prayer boards or tables in each classroom, and pupils are given time and encouragement to use them by their teachers. The school has just begun to think about using some of its gardens as a quiet area for reflection.

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

Pupils generally like worship, especially when it is led by visitors such as the Family Trust, who make it fun. Older pupils spoke very maturely about their appreciation of a special dedicated time in the day when they can pray. Some of the younger pupils said that they liked the peace and quiet of worship. Pupils know that worship is a way 'to talk to God' and 'to connect with God'. They also know that it is to thank God, to say sorry, and to share their thoughts about God. Pupils behave very well during collective worship and like to be involved. The headteacher has set up a Children's Worship Committee with pupils from each year group. They are learning to take a greater role in planning and leading some acts of worship. The rector, as link governor for collective worship, plans it with the headteacher, who is the co-ordinator. This is done with the help of the new Rochester diocesan framework. This ensures that pupils become familiar with basic Anglican practices, such as the structure of worship and liturgical responses. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the Church's year. Currently, three major festivals are celebrated in church, with good parental support, and there are plans to increase this emphasis on Christian festivals. Year 6 pupils now attend the annual Church Schools Festival, where they take part in a Eucharist service in Rochester Cathedral. The preparation for this with the rector has enabled pupils to explore some deep religious questions. Monitoring acts of worship by adults has been established in response to the last inspection. Pupils are not yet involved in this, although they do have some opportunities to express their views on how worship could be improved.

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

Trottscliffe's mission statement expresses a clear Christian vision for the school, as well as the intention to become 'an even stronger Christian community.' This was drawn up through consultation with all stakeholders and is an improvement since the last inspection. It reflects the way in which the school has become much more explicit about its Church of England status. This is also reflected on its website. The acting headteacher and the governing body addressed the four main issues from the last inspection and governors are now much more supportive of the school as a Church school. The school's Christian agenda now features regularly at all full governing body meetings, which the rector starts with a Bible reading and prayer. The school has evaluated itself clearly and accurately as a Church school and has identified on-going areas for development. Recently, the appointment of a committed Christian headteacher, with good experience of leading another Church school, has safeguarded the future development of the Christian life of the school. She has already brought a deeper spirituality to the worship of the school and is encouraging pupils to be more involved. This has been done with the active support of the rector, reflecting the very good relationship between the parish church and the school. The school has also benefited from the support of other local Church of England schools and from in-service training by Rochester Diocese. Parents and the community are very supportive of the school, and more parents now choose it because it is a Church school.