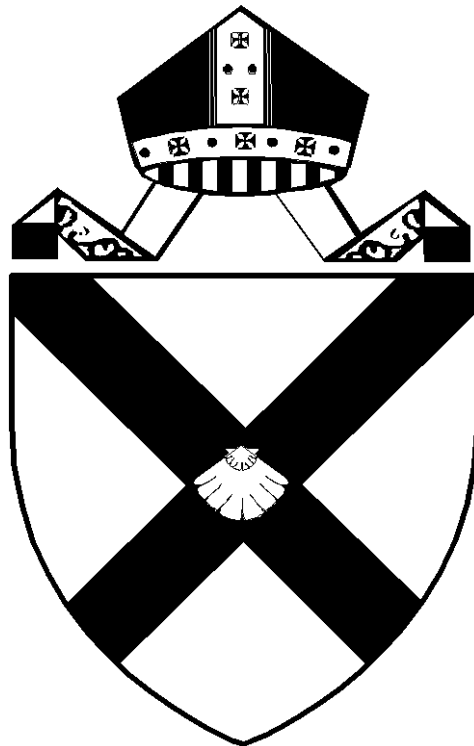


STATUTORY INSPECTION of ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

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2012



**St. Mark's Eccles Church of England
Primary School**

Voluntary Controlled

Eccles Row, Eccles, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7HS
Unique Reference No: 118618
Kent LA

Acting Head Teachers: Jonathan Bassett,
Vanessa Dunnet and Clare Fullagar
Chair of Governors: Colin Jones
Incumbent: Revd. Chris Van Straaten
Inspector: Anne-Marie Trustram
Inspection: 10th February 2012

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

St. Mark's Voluntary Controlled CE Primary School

Eccles Row, ECCLES, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7HS

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 10th February 2012

Date of last inspection: 27th November 2008

School's unique reference number: 118618

Acting Headteachers: Jonathan Bassett, Vanessa Dunnet and Clare Fullagar

Inspector's name and number: Anne-Marie Trustram No.635

School context

St. Mark's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average primary school of 134 pupils. Most pupils are White British, taught in mixed age classes apart from the Year 6 class. About ten percent are from regular worshipping families. It is an eco school on the fringes of Eccles. It embraces renewable technologies through the use of a green roof, solar panels and rainwater harvesting. A substantive head teacher has been appointed from April 2012. OfSTED judged the school to be satisfactory overall, with good pupil behaviour.

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

St Mark's Church of England Primary School has made good progress since the last inspection, especially with collective worship. Christian principles underpin the life of the school and nurture all aspects of pupils' lives. The school provides a Christian environment where all pupils can aspire to reach their potential.

Established strengths

- The school environment which makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual development of all pupils
- The strength of the partnership between the school, the parish church and the wider community
- The positive attitude to collective worship where pupils are given opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth

Focus for development

- To promote the school's Christian status better in its documentation. (This was recommended at the last inspection.)
- To extend opportunities for pupils to plan, lead and evaluate collective worship
- To explore ways for staff and governors to articulate and clarify the school's distinctive Christian values and link them to specific Bible stories

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

St Mark's Church of England Primary School is a place where pupils are cared for and nurtured as children of God. The school radiates a positive Christian ethos where Christian values are evident in the daily lives of pupils. This results in excellent behaviour and relationships throughout the school. Parents say, 'the school is more like a family and not only a school'. The Christian character of the school impacts significantly on the life of all stakeholders. Both parents and pupils value the strong sense of 'community' which exemplifies a symbiotic relationship between school and the parish church. Some of the youngest pupils can demonstrate the spiritual nurturing that the school offers and can articulate their understanding of the spiritual aspects of their lives. For example, following an RE lesson on parables, one pupil revealed how the parable of the Unmerciful Servant had impacted on his life. He said, 'I used to be like that but now I've changed'. Through

discussions with pupils it is clear that the imaginative and colourful Christian environment influences their lives. They say the stained glass windows 'have messages that help us with our lives' and the activities in the classroom prayer stations 'help us to pray to God'. The RE curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' social, moral, cultural, and spiritual development and standards are broadly in line with national expectations. The Christian ethos of the school has a major impact on pupils' awareness of the needs of others. Through a daily collection as part of worship, they are proactive in supporting a variety of local charities, including Demelza House. They are growing in their understanding of others in the wider global community by beginning to support an overseas charity in Malawi.

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

Pupils speak enthusiastically about worship. They show great reverence during acts of worship in the way they enter and leave the hall and by their excellent behaviour and involvement. They especially enjoy singing, which unites the school and forms a strong background to the acts of worship. Pupils feel that their contribution to worship is valued and in particular they appreciate being able to read and write their own prayers. They would, however, like further opportunities to plan and lead worship. They say that the prayer tree in the hall offers them opportunities to express their concerns. The prayer tree is also used by parents. Acts of Worship are co-ordinated by the headteacher using the Canterbury Diocesan Scheme for Worship, which follows the Church's Year. Pupils are able to articulate clearly the teachings of Jesus. They recognise the impact of His teaching on their lives, by saying, 'Christians believe in Jesus and want to follow in His footsteps.' One of the youngest pupils, when talking about prayer said, 'Prayer helps us to think about God and Jesus'. The school has begun to make worship more demonstrably Anglican, as recommended in the last inspection. For example, pupils share the peace at the start of worship and they choose a blessing to be read at the end. Liturgical colours are used to represent an altar cloth and a candle is lit during silent reflection. The vicar, who is on the governing body, leads Family Worship in school on a fortnightly basis and is well known by all members of the school community. This service is very popular with parents, many of whom attend on a regular basis. For many parents, school is 'church'. Older pupils attend the annual Church Schools' Festival in Rochester, where they have the opportunity to experience a Eucharist service. This was another development point from the last inspection.

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

There is a strong commitment from the governing body and staff to lead a Christian school. Staff and governors are committed to Christian values but these values are not yet linked to Bible stories and made explicit in the school's documentation. The governing body has addressed most of the issues from the last report but the school's documentation is not yet sufficiently explicit in its Christian declaration. This can be addressed through school policies, the school prospectus, the school mission statement and the school website. Community cohesion is seen as a collective responsibility and pupils are encouraged to take part in local church services, including Back to Church Sunday. Parents see the vicar as a key person within the life of the school and refer to him as 'fantastic in the way he puts himself out for the school'. The popular holiday clubs run by the church are well supported by families. Members of the church community run the King's Squad along with a member of staff and the annual Christian Treasure Seekers club is regularly oversubscribed. The school is committed to offering pupils wider experiences of spiritual development beyond its own environment. For example, school council members from neighbouring schools have begun leading worship in St. Mark's. The school has successfully responded to training from the diocese by raising pupil's awareness of the big Christian festivals, including Pentecost. School leaders and governors ensure that all stakeholders contribute to regular self evaluation that informs development planning. These include questionnaires to parents and pupils. Governors monitor Collective Worship and RE as a discrete subject and feedback is subsequently given to staff. The RE subject leader is relatively new to the post and the school is aware of the professional development that needs to take place, including assessment for learning and mixed age planning.