



**St Mark's CE Primary School,
Staplefield**

Diocese of Chichester

Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Inspection Report



Date of inspection:	16 May 2011
Name of inspector:	Christopher Todd
NS inspector's number:	554
School address:	Brantridge Lane Staplefield West Sussex RH17 6EN
Unique reference number:	126015
Status:	Voluntary Controlled
Number on roll:	96
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
LA:	West Sussex
Name of chair of governors:	Helen Arnold
Name of headteacher:	Penny Kennedy
Date of previous inspection:	March 2008

The inspection of denominational education and collective worship in the school was carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Description of the school

St Mark's is a small rural primary of 4 classes located in the village of Staplefield in the middle of West Sussex. It is close to other villages and the towns of Crawley and Haywards Heath. Pupils are drawn from a wide geographical area and are from a variety of socio-economic groups. The school, originally a Victorian building, has been extended and enhanced over recent years, most recently by the addition of a school kitchen and enlarged staffroom. The school has recently gained a number of awards including Eco School Green Flag Award, Healthy School Award and Sportsmark Gold Award. The headteacher has been in post since September 2010.

Summary judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mark's CE Primary School, Staplefield as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The strong Christian vision which drives the school's ongoing development is the result of the clear-sighted leadership of the head teacher working in close partnership with a highly dedicated staff and extremely committed governors. Pupils strongly reflect the school's ethos of love and care for all, evidenced in their excellent behaviour. This provides a stable environment for the good learning evident in the school and for its ability to effect continual improvement.

Grade: 1

Established strengths

- The Christian values shared by members of all stakeholder groups
- The excellent quality of the relationships between all members of the school community
- The close, positive links between the school, local churches and the wider community

Focus for development

- Develop ways in which the school's Christian character can enhance the children's understanding of cultural diversity at a national and global level
- To further strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship and to provide more opportunities for children to lead acts of worship.

The school meets the statutory requirement for Collective Worship	Yes
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The school, through its distinctive Christian character is outstanding at meeting the needs of all its learners.

There is a strong Christian ethos throughout the school and pupils are provided with high quality learning experiences in a calm, peaceful environment. The school's Christian character is clearly displayed around the school in symbols and displays, including reflection corners in every classroom. Relationships across the school are outstanding and reflect the school's shared Christian values. Pupils are able to articulate how the positive and affirming ethos of the school is clearly linked to Christian values of kindness and caring. For example, a number of the pupils spoke of the importance of forgiveness in dealing with disagreements between children. Behaviour is excellent.

The school provides good spiritual, moral and social development and children and families with other faiths or with no faith are welcomed and affirmed. Parents commented positively on the close relationship between the school, the local church and the wider community. One parent spoke movingly of her recent illness and the support she and her child received from the school during this time. The school is viewed as a place where children demonstrably care for each other and where the sense of community enhances their learning and their spiritual and personal development. To extend this further the school should seek to deepen the pupils' understanding of cultural diversity at both national and international level.

Grade: 1

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good.

Collective Worship is given a high priority at St. Mark's to ensure that all members of the school community engage in enjoyable and reflective acts of worship. Themes are planned termly by the headteacher, based on Christian beliefs, values and the Church's year. Christian and other faith festivals are celebrated as appropriate. Pupils readily talk about the themes for worship and the impact these are having on their lives. One parent mentioned that her child frequently asked searching questions after an act of worship and was very keen to engage in dialogue about the theme. Attitudes to worship are excellent, with pupils extremely keen to participate by answering questions and helping with organisation. This could be extended further through pupils planning and leading significant aspects of the worship.

The school has developed close and supportive links with the local Anglican churches and other faith communities. This enables children to understand Christianity from different denominational perspectives, as well as developing an understanding of Anglican faith and practice. Christian symbols (the Cross and lighted candle) are used appropriately in worship, to further emphasise the special relationship between church and school. A cycle of formal evaluation of worship leading to action planning is evolving and has been rightly identified by the school as an area for further development.

Grade: 2

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

The headteacher, working with the governors, provide a very strong and effective leadership team. Together with the staff this ensures the distinctive character of the school is maintained and further developed. The governors are clear that “this is a Christian school” and that “spirituality is integral to the whole school” and they speak of the care and consideration the children give to each other. The vision statement and the aims of the school have recently been reviewed with staff, governors and the wider community and are central to the leadership of the school. The new vision statement – ‘Together, in God’s love, we will shine’ – has been promoted across the school and is easily understood by all the pupils, being performed (with hand actions) as part of the daily act of Collective Worship.

The partnerships that exist between the school and the local community are strengths of the school. The headteacher actively ensures support and understanding by communicating with local residents about school issues and in return achieves a high level of support from the community. The school is proactive in seeking the views of its members by various questionnaires and the responses to these surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction. These questionnaires are a part of the school’s self evaluation which is highly effective. The parents are very aware of and strongly support the Christian foundation of the school. They speak very highly of the school and its level of support for the whole child.

Grade: 1