

**REPORT TO THE GOVERNING BODY ON A  
DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION  
UNDER SECTION 23 OF THE SCHOOLS' INSPECTION ACT**

**DIOCESE OF CANTERBURY**

**GUSTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
Burgoyne Heights,  
Guston,  
Dover,  
Kent,  
CT15 5LR**

<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Miss G. A. Waters</b>
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	<b>The Revd. J. W. Philpott</b>
<b>Denominational Inspector</b>	<b>Miss J.A. Bainbridge</b>
<b>Dates of Inspection</b>	<b>6, 18, 21 and 22 October 2004</b>

## **GUSTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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I should like to thank all governors, staff and pupils for their help and co-operation during my time at Guston.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Guston Church of England Primary School is a small voluntary controlled school for children aged 4 – 11. It was founded in the village of Guston in 1870. In 1982 it was rebuilt at Burgoyne Heights on the edge of a new housing development for the families of soldiers stationed in the nearby army barracks. As a result, the majority of pupils since then have come from army families, resulting in a high turnover of pupils and fluctuations in the size of the roll. Statistics show an annual mobility rate of about 40% of the school roll. Only one Year 6 pupil has received his entire primary education at Guston.

Currently there are 118 pupils on roll organised into five classes. Most are drawn from the immediate locality of the school, many from the neighbouring housing estate. Some properties there are now in private ownership, and currently 40% of children are from civilian families and 60% from army families. The latter group includes a number of Nepalese children, comprising 17% of the roll, whose fathers are serving with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Slightly more families than average claim free school meals. The proportion of children with special educational needs is well above the national average. A fifth of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and receive support with English as an additional language.

## **EVIDENCE DATA**

The following aspects of school life were inspected.

- Collective worship.
- The ethos of the school, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Evidence for the report was provided by the following

- Observation of three acts of collective worship, including the Harvest Festival.
- Observation of Circle Time/PSHE lesson in one class.
- Discussion with the Headteacher, Chairman of Governors and the Vicar of Guston.
- Discussion with the School Council.
- Examination of the school prospectus and policies for collective worship, spiritual development, child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, equal opportunities, racial equality and drugs education.
- Scrutiny of the relevant part of the School Development Plan.
- Scrutiny of plans and records for collective worship.

## **ADMISSIONS**

Pupils are admitted to the school in accordance with the admissions policy of Kent County Council. In a controlled school the criteria include provision for stating denominational preference.

## **ACTS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

### **Organisation**

An act of worship is held in school every day, fully meeting legal requirements. The content of acts of worship is entirely consistent with the school's Church of England foundation. Parents' right to withdraw their child from collective worship is stated in the prospectus and in the worship policy. There are currently no withdrawals.

There is a helpful and detailed policy for collective worship which sets out the aims of worship very clearly. It was last revised in June 2004.

The weekly pattern of worship provides for the whole school together on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. These acts of worship are led by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and visiting clergy. On Tuesdays and Thursdays worship takes place for the upper and lower school separately and is led by class teachers on a rota basis.

In addition to the morning act of worship, prayers are said in each class before lunch and at the end of the day.

On special occasions during the year there are also opportunities for the children to worship in the two parish churches associated with the school.

### **Planning**

The Headteacher is the worship co-ordinator. She has worked with commitment and sensitivity to develop the tradition of worship in the school, ensuring that it is open and accessible to pupils while remaining faithful to its Anglican roots.

Planning is currently based on new materials produced by the Diocesan Board of Education. These provide a broad theme for each term, broken down into weekly topics which explore and develop the theme in more detail. During the week of the inspection the overall theme was 'Celebration' and the week's topic was 'Celebrating Jesus.' All staff are involved in leading collective worship and they plan individual acts of worship with care, selecting material and tailoring it to the needs and understanding of the pupils.

Alongside the daily worship plan is a schedule covering the liturgical year and specifying how its principal events will be observed. This plan covers the celebration of festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter in the local parish churches as well as in school. It also identifies those occasions which will be marked chiefly by participation in a church service, such as Mothering Sunday and Palm Sunday, and others, such as Lent, which are marked by school-based activities. This schedule is a valuable tool which helps to ensure that the festivals and seasons of the Church's year are covered appropriately. It also assists forward planning for these events, which are given considerable significance in the life of the school.

The school recognises the need to keep formal plans and records of worship, and to link these with regular monitoring and evaluation to inform future planning and the

maintenance of good practice. Systems which proved effective in the past have lapsed, and work has begun to devise a new computer-based approach which will be relatively simple to maintain. It is recommended that the Headteacher, governors and staff continue to work to develop a more rigorous approach to the formal planning, recording and monitoring of worship.

### **Physical Environment**

Worship is held in the school hall which is large enough to accommodate the whole school. There is also space for a significant number of parents and friends who are invited to join key celebrations such as the Harvest Festival. For whole school worship the children sit in a horseshoe shape, the younger ones on the floor and the older ones on benches at the back. This format creates a sense of intimacy and enables all the children to see and hear clearly. In key stage worship pupils sit in a semi-circle facing a worship centre set up by the teacher.

The hall has recently been refurbished and provides a bright, attractive setting. It is also extremely well equipped for worship, with a sound system, data projector and screen. The screen is well used to display visual images as well as the words of hymns. A lighted candle signifies the time of worship and provides an additional focus.

### **Quality of Experience**

The quality of the acts of worship observed during the inspection was good or very good. Overall, collective worship offers pupils stimulating and varied experiences and makes a very effective contribution to their personal development, including their spiritual development. It also affirms and celebrates the values that underlie the strong Christian ethos of the school.

On all the occasions observed, children entered the hall quietly to music. An image or words projected onto the screen provided a visual focus. There was a sense of expectation as they waited for worship to begin. During worship, children were attentive to those who were speaking. The relaxed family atmosphere meant that children felt confident in answering questions and contributing ideas. Their responses were thoughtful and articulate.

The purpose of the worship was always clear. In daily worship, clear links were made with the theme and with topics covered in previous acts of worship. At the Harvest Festival the Headteacher explained the reasons for the celebration very carefully for the benefit of the parents present as well as the children, and linked the act of worship to the cake sale to be held later to raise funds for a school in India.

Material was well selected and presented in ways which were accessible to the pupils. In the acts of worship seen, input by the leader was balanced well with opportunities for children to respond and participate, and with singing, reflection and prayer. Care was taken to ensure that the different components of each act of worship complemented each other. In an act of worship celebrating Jesus as the Light of the world, KS1 children examined a baptism candle, focused on candles lit by the teacher, listened to the music 'There's a light that's shining', sang 'This little light of mine', and heard the words of 'Jesus bids us shine' used as a prayer. Care was also taken to help the children link the idea of light to their own experience, and they were invited

to talk and think about the times they had seen candles being used at home and in church.

Children's active involvement is a particular strength of worship at Guston. They help to prepare the hall and take responsibility for operating the equipment. There are many opportunities for them to answer questions, suggest ideas, and to think about the feelings and responses of characters in a story. Children are frequently invited to act out a story or help the leader in some way, as when pupils were chosen to act out the stories of the lost sheep and the lost coin in a whole school assembly on 'Celebrating Jesus'. Each act of worship includes a song or hymn which is accompanied by pupils playing instruments. All can join in the Lord's Prayer, the Grace, or the simple responses which are sometimes used. The Friday assembly gives pupils the opportunity to celebrate each other's achievements when certificates are awarded.

The Harvest Festival provided an outstanding example of pupils' involvement in worship. Every child in the school took an active part. The school band accompanied the singing. Classes 1 – 4 each gave a presentation on some aspect of harvest, while Class 5 read prayers and contributed two dances composed by the pupils themselves. One, a Greek dance, drew on work they had been doing in history. The other was performed by four Nepalese girls in national costume, using traditional Indian music. The presence of parents and younger siblings contributed to the sense of occasion and atmosphere of celebration.

Live music is another strength of acts of worship. Reference has already been made to the school band which plays for some worship in school and for church services. Individual musicians help to accompany the singing on other occasions. The Headteacher also provides piano accompaniment. The school has a confident and enthusiastic choir which gives a lead in singing. There is a good repertoire of hymns and worship songs and pupils sing tunefully and with real feeling.

Prayer and reflection are planned elements in all acts of worship. There is generally a good balance between quiet reflection, prayers said by the teacher or read by pupils, and prayers said by all together. This is an area the school would like to develop further, particularly to encourage the children themselves to contribute their own prayers. It is recommended that exploration of a greater variety of approaches to prayer is made a focus for the further development of collective worship, and that INSET is provided for staff to support this.

Children's experience of worship is broadened by church visits and by the involvement of local clergy who come into school to lead worship on a regular basis.

### **Resources and In-Service Training**

Funding for collective worship is taken from the RE budget. In the past year there has been expenditure on CDs, candleholders, OHTs of hymns and sheet music for piano accompaniment. In addition, the setting for worship has been considerably enhanced by the purchase of new curtains for the hall, a digital projector and electronic screen, and stackable staging. A laptop computer has been set aside for PowerPoint presentations in the hall, and a PA system and stage lighting have also been installed.

A good selection of published materials is in place to support worship, and there is a commitment to building this up further.

INSET for all staff was provided in 2000/2001 following the previous inspection, and further opportunities for staff development are planned for the current academic year.

## **ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Relationships within the School**

Relationships among all members of the school community are excellent. They are rooted in the school's explicit aim to create an ethos in which 'each child is respected, cared for and encouraged to achieve his/her potential.' (Mission Statement) (Prospectus)

Pupils work and play well together. PSHE, circle time and collective worship are all used to encourage positive relationships. 'In an act of worship which included the celebration of achievements, children as well as staff were affirming of the work of others. The example of circle time observed dealt with feelings, and pupils were encouraged to articulate their own experiences of a range of emotions and listen to the different responses of their peers. They were able to do this confidently and with sensitivity because of the very positive role model offered by the teacher and his affirmation of every child. Children were also able to build on previous work where they had identified each other's qualities and strengths. One aim of the PSHE programme is 'the development of good relationships and respecting differences between people.' The school has significant experience of receiving children from ethnic minority groups, and considerable weight is put on this aspect of the school's work.

All staff have established warm and supportive relationships with their pupils. In addition, each child is asked to choose a 'special person' from among the staff to whom they can go with any personal problems or concerns. As a result children feel safe and are confident and happy in school. They develop positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do their best.

Staff work very effectively and supportively as a team and are appreciative of each other's strengths. They maintain good relationships with parents and work positively with them for the benefit of pupils.

### **Behaviour and Discipline**

Pupils behave very well in class, around the school and in the playground. Children are well aware of the behaviour expected of them. The school's code of conduct is displayed around the school. Each class draws up its own rules and these are prominently displayed in the classrooms. All rules stress the positive rather than negative aspects of behaviour.

There are sanctions for misbehaviour, but the emphasis is on the affirmation of good conduct. Good behaviour is reinforced through a system of rewards for individuals and whole classes. Pupils who sometimes find it difficult to behave appropriately are well supported by staff. They are given individual targets and record sheets which show their achievements.

The school's policy for behaviour and discipline sets out clear expectations and guidelines for ensuring good behaviour. These are followed consistently across the school.

### **Pastoral Care**

Guston is a very caring community. Again, concern for each child's happiness and well-being is expressed explicitly in its aims and linked to its vision of the school as a Christian community.

Teachers know their pupils very well. Children are confident in approaching staff when they have a problem. The identification of a member of staff as a 'special person' makes an important contribution to each child's sense of security. Support staff play a crucial role in ensuring that children's needs are identified and met. Many instances of staff spontaneously showing care for each other, for pupils and for their parents were observed during the period of the inspection. Pupils are also caring of one another.

The school has experienced a number of difficult situations recently, including the deaths of a teacher and a pupil. The great sensitivity and skill with which these have been handled were mentioned by a number of people during the course of the inspection.

The school is committed to being fully inclusive and works hard to meet the diverse range needs of its pupils. Special care is taken to ensure that new pupils, who often arrive in the middle of a term, are helped to settle in quickly.

Children are helped to become well-rounded individuals through visits, visitors and a growing programme of extra-curricular activities which is greatly appreciated.

### **Parish and Community Links**

The school's relative isolation on the outskirts of both Dover and the village of Guston means that it has to work hard to foster church and community links. Its success in this area was recognised in 2002 when it received the Liz Hoadley Church School Community Links Award.

It has developed close relationships with both St Martin's Guston and St Mary Castro. In the course of the year school services are held in both churches, and children are also involved in special events at each church, where they contribute music, readings, drama, dance and prayers. Now that the vicar of St Mary's Dover has taken over responsibility for the parish of Guston, it is hoped to develop links with that church too.

The Incumbent and two army chaplains serve on the governing body and visit the school regularly to lead worship. The Incumbent has also come in to talk to one class about signs and symbols as part of their work in RE.

In the wider community, the school took part in the Dover Multi-Cultural Festival in June 2004.



Children are encouraged to be aware of the needs of others and the school supports a number of charities. In 2003/4 £1,200 was raised for cancer research in memory of a teacher who had died. Other fundraising activities have supported initiatives such as Jeans for Genes and Britain's Biggest Breakfast. A major project involves a link with a village in India through the charity People First International. Money has been raised to provide a floor and a roof for the village school, and a well supported cake sale after the harvest festival aimed to raise funds for basic equipment for pupils. This link has been strengthened by the visit of a member of staff to the village and school. His photographs of the place and its people are displayed in the hall and have made the project come alive for the children, staff and parents.

### **Buildings and the School Environment**

The school enjoys good accommodation and pleasant grounds. The learning environment is well-cared for and made stimulating with attractive displays of children's work. Children take seriously their responsibility to help keep the buildings and grounds clean and tidy.

### **Opportunities for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

Overall, Guston makes very good provision for pupils' personal development, and this is a special strength of the school. Its statement of aims stresses its commitment to developing the whole child, fostering self-esteem, and helping 'children to develop their own beliefs and personal values.' (Prospectus)

The school sets particular value on fostering children's spiritual development and has a clear policy for this. It emphasises 'that Christian beliefs and values underpin the school's life and work' while also stressing the importance of 'an understanding of and a respect for other faiths and religious practices.'

Collective worship provides very good opportunities for spiritual development, particularly through times of prayer and reflection. It also enables them to consider Christian beliefs and values and to relate these to their own experiences. The use of silence and reflection is encouraged in all areas of the curriculum.

Further very good provision for spiritual development was observed in circle time where children were given time to articulate their feelings and to reflect on ways of responding to others.

Explicit expectations for behaviour are based on Christian principles of care and respect for others and promote children's moral development very effectively. The clear system of rewards and sanctions helps them to develop a secure sense of right and wrong. Involvement in creating classroom rules helps pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour and to be aware of its impact on others.

Opportunities for exploring moral issues are provided in the collective worship scheme and in the excellent programme for PSHE, which includes modules on such things as right and wrong, choices and rules.

Pupils' social development is rooted in the school's belief that each individual is worthy of value and respect. All are enabled to build up true self-esteem and develop respect for others. The celebration of individual success, as shown in the weekly achievement awards is an example of one strategy for achieving this. It is important that success is measured not only in terms of good work, but in attitudes and behaviour as well. 'Being polite', 'trying hard' and 'sitting nicely on the carpet,' as well as 'making an excellent Greek mask' earned certificates during the inspection week.

The PSHE programme supports pupils' social development very well, while timetabled circle time offers them time to discuss and reflect on issues relating to feelings and relationships.

The school offers many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility through undertaking jobs in the classroom and around the school. The School Council is proving effective in enabling children to put forward their own ideas and influence school policy.

Support of charities and involvement in the local churches and neighbourhood encourage pupils to exercise their sense of responsibility towards the wider community.

Cultural awareness is fostered through the curriculum, through extra-curricular activities, and through a very good programme of visits to the theatre and places of cultural interest. Music is a particular strength. Children are encouraged to listen to both live and recorded music in assemblies. They enjoy the chance to take part in dramatic and musical productions. The school is justly proud of its choir and band.

The RE syllabus includes provision for learning about the Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu faiths. While this is clearly a Christian school, opportunities are taken to affirm and celebrate the beliefs of non-Christian faiths; for instance a 'Divali Day' was being planned to coincide with the celebration of the festival by the school's Hindu pupils. Children also have opportunities to explore cultures not currently represented in the school. Recently an 'Africa Day' was held to extend children's awareness of African culture, and the older children enjoyed a day of multi-cultural art and craft at Quex Africa. Nearer to home, the school has links with schools in several European countries through its participation in the Comenius Project.

## **PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION**

Progress since the last Section 23 inspection in May 1999 has been good. The school brochure has been amended to include the right of withdrawal from collective worship. The Collective Worship Policy has been revised to incorporate a section on objectives. Staff have discussed and implemented increased opportunities for pupils to contribute to worship, and have benefited from INSET.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

These features of the school deserve particular praise.

- Clear Christian values underpin a strong ethos of care and respect for every member of the school community.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The high standard of collective worship engages and involves pupils very well.
- The pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- In spite of the school's relatively isolated position, all those involved in the school work very hard to maintain and develop links with the local churches and community

## **ISSUES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

In order to develop the worshipping life of the school further, the Headteacher, staff and governors are recommended to consider the following.

- Devising a more rigorous approach to the planning, recording and evaluation of collective worship.
- Exploring a greater variety of approaches to prayer, supported by in-service training for the whole staff.

**GUSTON C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL  
DOVER**

**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION, 6, 18, 21 AND 22 OCTOBER  
2004**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

Guston Primary is very effective as a Church of England school. During the inspection of denominational provision, the following aspects were highlighted.

**Commendations**

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**Issues for development**

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