

Doddinghurst Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Church Lane
Doddinghurst
Brentwood
Essex
CM15 ONJ

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex
Date of inspection: 30 April 2012
Date of last inspection: 23 February 2009
School's unique reference number: 115124
Headteacher: Mrs Margaret Cooper
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

Doddinghurst Junior School is a rural school on the outskirts of Brentwood, serving the parish of Doddinghurst. Currently there are 230 pupils who are mainly from a White British background. The school is close to the parish church of All Saints. The headteacher has been in post for five years. The school is the recipient of many national awards including the Full International Schools Award.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Doddinghurst as a Church of England school are outstanding

Here is a place where everyone is welcomed and encouraged to achieve. Doddinghurst Junior is an excellent church school where everyone is included and there is a real sense of belonging. All are given the opportunities and experiences to support their Christian pilgrimage.

Established strengths

- The vision and leadership of the headteacher, supported by the whole school community.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils to life and learning.
- The excellent links with the church.
- The importance of prayer in the life of the school.

Focus for development

- Engage pupils in the development of spaces for reflection, both inside and outside the classroom.
- Provide a forum for clergy and pupils to engage in dialogue on the deep questions of life.

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

Doddinghurst Junior provides an excellent learning environment where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. Here is a place where relationships are nurtured and everyone values the care and respect which underpins all school life. Within this cohesive family, there is a very strong sense of what it means to be living in a community in which church and school links are extremely important. Parents speak highly of this village school where, 'every child is greeted individually each morning by name' and older pupils take on the role of 'guardian angels' with Year 3 newcomers. Pupils say they value their teachers and their friends, and are enthusiastic about their lessons and learning. Some pupils aspire to be teachers because of the good role models they have seen. The full range of extra curricular activities enriches and ensures the widest range of achievement is valued and pupils feel able to make a positive contribution, for example, through music and sport. They enjoy giving

to charity through which they experience the Christian values of service and gratitude. Their sense of global awareness is supported through links with a school in Bavaria as well as cultural days throughout the year. Bright, prominent displays as well as the new outdoor classroom greatly enhance pupils' spiritual development. Pupils welcome the opportunity to develop their class prayer areas as well as spaces for reflection in the school grounds. They appreciate the places, 'in classrooms where our Bibles are; if we wanted quiet and peace we could stand there and think'. They value spaces to reflect such as the field or outdoor area, 'to gather their thoughts' and, 'think how Jesus would feel'; finding these places conducive to writing prayers and, 'praying to God'. Pupils respect and understand Christianity as well as other faiths such as Buddhism and Hinduism, speaking of the stories from different cultures and how they apply the values learned to their lives. They enjoy exploring deep questions such as, 'what is the meaning of life and how we are created' and welcome a time and space to meet with 'people from the church and ask them what we really don't understand'.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Prayerful and meaningful worship is clearly at the heart of this school, permeating all school life and practice. The attitude of pupils to collective worship is excellent because the quality of worship offered to them involves them and greatly supports their spiritual development. Pupils clearly enjoy worshipping together in a setting which enables them to encounter Jesus. They speak highly of clergy, village and pupils involvement in worship, especially seen in weekly 'Open the Book' worship, bringing Bible stories to life. An excellent example is the story of the young king Josiah, teaching 'however old you are, you can always make a difference'. The Children's Prayer Book containing pupils' own prayers is always used in worship. Pupils value prayer as a highlight in worship as, 'when you pray it gets you ready for the day'. Lunchtime and hometime prayers as well as The Lord's Prayer feature highly; and they speak of forgiveness, following the model Jesus shows. The parish church of All Saints is seen as an extension of the school, where worship in church is seen as 'a calmer place, God's holy place with reminders of stories'. Pupils enjoy worship, 'led by children when you choose the hymns and what goes on in the service', where it 'gives you a chance to make that worship your own'. Pupils already write down their thoughts on collective worship. They welcome the opportunity to do this more regularly for governors to read as they feel they would 'look to the future and plan new things based on our thoughts'. In these ways, worship is improving in integrity and quality.

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

The distinctive Christian vision is clearly evident and effectively promoted by the headteacher, together with her staff, the clergy and governors. It is embraced by pupils and parents so that the school's Anglican foundation is celebrated amongst the whole school community. Everyone models the school vision to ensure the development of the whole child to their fullest potential, equipping them with skills for life. Exemplary relationships show the key role that Christian values play in the life of the school. Pupils live out the twin values of respect and responsibility. Parents speak of how these values are carried out into the wider community, such as 'Harvest for the Hungry'; the giving of harvest gifts to be transported to Bulgaria. The school also provides a Junior Neighbourhood Watch scheme. This is the first such initiative in the county. Parents praise the committed staff who go the extra mile to ensure the happiness of the pupils. Foundation governors are open to new ways of taking the school forward, especially in their systematic monitoring and evaluative role. They appoint effective teachers, providing them with leadership opportunities. The school has worked hard and addressed areas from the last inspection, showing how the school has moved on. Governors have identified clear areas for future development in order to maintain excellent practice, such as establishing a reflection space for the school and village community to use. A unique feature of Doddinghurst's link with the churches and the school is the Covenant Award, given by the village churches for acts of kindness shown by pupils. The school values support from the local family of church schools as well as the diocese so everyone is involved in upholding the school's Church of England foundation. Doddinghurst is truly inclusive, modelling and contributing to community cohesion.

