



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Forest Row CE Primary School

School Lane  
Hartfield Road  
Forest Row  
RH18 5DZ

**Previous SIAMS grade: Good**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Chichester**

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 1 March 2016

Date of last inspection: June 2010

School's unique reference number: 114504

Headteacher: Ann Williams

Inspector's name and number: Anne Hanney 452

### School context

Forest Row is a village school with 224 pupils on roll. Mobility is high. Year groups vary from 20 to 43 pupils. A significant number of parents value alternative life styles, beliefs and education, resulting in approximately 20% of pupils joining the school after Reception. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is above average. The school is in the parish of Holy Trinity. The new vicar has been in post for 18 months. The school was judged "good" by Ofsted in July 2015.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Forest Row as a Church of England school are good

- Christian values are implicitly embedded in the daily life of the school resulting in the highest level of care demonstrated by staff and pupils.
- The behaviour of pupils is good with excellent support for each child founded on respect and inclusivity, within the school's distinctive Christian ethos.
- Collective worship is an integral part of school life and incorporated naturally across the school curriculum.
- Religious education (RE) is highly valued by children and most have a good understanding of its importance in their lives.
- Pupils' voice is valued and provides good evidence of successful spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. (SMSC).

### Areas to improve

- Make the links to the Christian nature of the values more distinctive.
- Make the monitoring of Christian distinctiveness and collective worship regular and robust.

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

Staff and pupils reflect Christian values that are demonstrated in their relationships with one another. This results in the school being a very happy, caring and calm environment for learning which impacts well on pupil's attainment. Most members of the school can recognise that the values they uphold are distinctively Christian and that these help them in their own lives. Parents regard the school as having a nurturing environment that is 'very accepting and inclusive where the school underpins the values shared at home'. They feel that there is the right balance between the school helping children to have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity whilst still allowing them to make their own informed decisions in personal faith; 'They are given the tools for making decisions in the future'. Behaviour in and around the school is good. This supports an environment where pupils are keen to learn and results in good progress. The Thrive programme can be seen in practice to raise the self-esteem of vulnerable children and improve their attendance levels. Pupils who have joined the school after Reception, can say how well they were welcomed and how the caring environment of the school helped them to 'settle and belong'. A Year 6 pupil who joined in Year 5 described Forest Row as a church school where you can feel safe. Displays and reflection areas throughout the school consistently seek the views of pupils and generally enable them to demonstrate pride in the school's Christian foundation. The 'big question' board, used daily in the corridor and within classes, encourages pupils to think deeply and write their responses. This enables pupils to demonstrate a good level in their SMSC development. However, these questions do not always reflect the explicitly Christian context of the church school. RE both reinforces the Christian character of the school and its inclusive ethos. Pupils enthuse about RE and most recognise it as being important in their lives. Those of other faiths say they feel safe to ask questions and proud to share their own knowledge within RE. As one parent said, 'This helps all children to recognise the common platform shared in world faiths.'

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

Collective worship is highly valued by staff and pupils who are keen to express what it means to them. Its focus is distinctively Christian. It is accessible to all pupils and makes a good contribution to the spiritual life of the school. The pupils say their school prayer with confidence and sing joyfully in worship. They are able to make some links with biblical material, such as the parable of the prodigal son, to their lives and the way in which they themselves can demonstrate the Christian value of forgiveness. The planning overview, carried out by the headteacher, is based on the church's year and Christian values. It is thorough and informs good practice which has a positive impact on worship, both in the hall and within classrooms. Pupil voice is highly valued in worship, as it is in all areas of school life, and planning takes account of this. Pupils say that they take ideas from collective worship that help them to contribute well in class worship and across the curriculum. Staff take an active part in worship by volunteering responses to reflection opportunities, singing with the pupils and nominating them for praise. This results in pupils feeling safe to contribute likewise. Each person is recognised as 'unique and special' and all listen attentively to each other's views. Parents consider that collective worship plays an important part in their children's lives. They welcome having the new vicar in school and the impact this is beginning to have on their children's learning about Jesus. Enthusiasm is expressed about the vicar's use of resources in telling stories whilst highlighting Christian values. Some parents of other Christian denominations are keen to play a more active part in attending and contributing to school worship. When the focus is on a more difficult concept such as the Holy Spirit, a well-planned link is made between collective worship and RE. This results in many pupils in Key Stage 2 being able to express confidently their personal understanding of the Trinity. One pupil described the Holy Spirit as, 'He is in you and stays with you.' Monitoring of collective

worship is not carried out formally and this limits further development in this area.

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

The leadership of the school was recognised by Ofsted, July 2015, to be good. This is reflected in Forest Row as a church school, where the headteacher passionately promotes a school vision based on Christian values and principles. Since the last inspection all school documentation has been updated to include the Christian vision for this church school. All leaders support this vision and most can describe the impact of these values: how they are threaded throughout school life and are supported well by the parish priest and church community. A good partnership is developing between Holy Trinity Church and the school in which the contribution of each is welcomed by the other. The school enjoys celebrating at services in church and the parishioners welcome contributions from the school for their parish magazine. Governors each have different responsibilities within the school and provide feedback to one another about church school developments. A 'thinking board' is in use for senior leaders and governors to capture responses to this feedback. This results in the governors identifying areas for church school improvement and the means to address them. Whilst the governors carry out monitoring it is not robust and regular enough to ensure further improvement. The school improvement plan identifies areas for church school development, but the evaluation has been mainly carried out by the headteacher. Ofsted identified the governors' good capacity to demonstrate rigour and they are keen to apply this further in their role of monitoring the school as a church school. A number of governors, including the vicar, are relatively new to the school. They have identified the need to become more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school as a church school and are keen to do so. This year the RE leader has had dedicated release time. This has ensured that monitoring and evaluation of the subject has been formalised and robustly practised within an identified time-table. This has raised staff confidence in teaching RE, had good impact on pupils' attitude to the subject and strengthened its impact on the Christian distinctiveness of the school. This practice provides a good model that can be used by other leaders in monitoring and evaluating Forest Row as a church school.

SIAMS report March 2016 Forest Row Church of England Primary School, RH18 5DZ