



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Northiam Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Main Street,
Northiam, Rye,
East Sussex
TN31 6NB

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 9 June 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2010

School's unique reference number: 114516

Headteacher: Kate Harper

Inspector's name and number: Cathy Slow 826

School context

Northiam is a small village school with 80 on roll taught in three mixed aged groups. The majority of children are of White British heritage. The number of children with additional needs is in line with the national average and that of children receiving pupil premium is slightly below the national average. A new Head of School, supported by the longer serving Executive Headteacher, was appointed in April 2016. The school is governed by an Interim Executive Board (IEB) which will end in September 2016 when local governors will take back responsibility for the school.

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

- The dedicated and passionate Christian leadership which supports everyone to give of and achieve their best.
- The positive relationships and welcoming atmosphere which foster a strong sense of Christian community and friendship.
- The high level of respect, care and nurture for all members of the school community firmly rooted in Christian values.
- Behaviour is of the highest standard, underpinned by Christian teaching and modelled by all staff .

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the evaluation and monitoring of the impact of collective worship to enhance the contribution worship makes to spiritual development.
- Build on current links with the partner church school sharing good practice in worship and religious education (RE).
- Expand the children's awareness of diversity to support their understanding of the differences in their own and other cultures.

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

Northiam is a very welcoming, happy school where all members of the community are strongly supported by the Christian values of friendship, trust, justice and fellowship selected by the school earlier this year. It is clear that Christian values are at the heart of what the school offers. A caring, encouraging team of staff, led by both the executive head and the head of school, model these values in their approach to all members of the school community. This promotes a calm, purposeful feel to the school where each child is valued and supported as an individual. Spiritual development is woven through the approach to behaviour, teaching and relationships. As a result, behaviour, including behaviour for learning, is excellent. Being a member of the school Christian based community is highly valued by children, parents and staff and seen in the way children help each other and in staff reinforcing this in conversations with children. Children show clear enjoyment for learning supported by committed, enthusiastic teachers and creative teaching which enables children to achieve well. Children with additional needs are well supported in the classroom, ensuring they learn as part of the whole class community.

Being part of a community or school family is an important aspect of school life which is reinforced through teaching, through the mixed lunch time groups, where older children take responsibility for younger children, and through the clear Christian centred nurture for all members of the school. Several parents have recently chosen to move their children to Northiam as they value the high level of individual support and the "special feel" of the school. Parents spoken to expressed their appreciation of what Northiam school does for their children which they attribute to the Christian ethos.

RE is well taught both discretely and woven into the whole curriculum and children take an active part in their learning with great enthusiasm. For example, a literacy lesson used quotes from the bible to explore balanced debate asking children to consider whether evidence suggests it is better to pray alone or in a church. It was soon discovered from reading quotes they found that there is evidence in the Bible to support both.

RE teaching explores prayer, cultural diversity, invites children to explore big questions and makes a significant contribution to spiritual, moral, cultural and social (SMSC) development. An awareness of diversity is introduced through RE and wider teaching, however there is a limited understanding of cultural diversity.

Children freely talk about how friendly, kind and caring the school is and how teachers encourage and help them. They are fully aware of the Christian values and several children talked about enjoying learning about the Bible and Jesus and how this helps them when they feel they need support. One visitor to the school said that being at the school enabled them to "notice just how much God does".

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Acts of worship are well planned following the church's year and include biblical material with clear references to Jesus and his teachings. As a result, children are able to make links between their experience, their use of prayer and the teaching in worship and RE. Children clearly enjoy taking part in worship, especially singing together which is a central part of worship at Northiam. They are aware that worship takes many forms and that through singing they can express thanks to God. Weekly plans are shared with parents in the school newsletter and these are linked to school values. Worship is led by staff and clergy with regular visits to the local church which strengthen the links between school and church. Children are very aware that their school is a church school and talk about visits to St Mary's church where they "go to worship and pray".

Prayer is central to the school and is an integral part of the school day. Children are confident about the purpose of prayer and are encouraged to reflect on how, when and why we pray through writing prayers at home and in school which are shared in class, in worship and at the

beginning of lunch in family groups. As a result many children talk about how prayer can help them and why they pray for others. One child came into school in the morning with her prayer in her hand, very proud to share it with the head. The Trinity has been a focus in worship and children are able to talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with confidence and remember examples that were used to help them understand "all one but three parts" as one child said.

Worship is regularly monitored through pupil voice, observations of acts of worship and feedback from parents who are invited to join worship for festivals and other school celebrations. Although the impact of worship can be seen in the feedback responses from children and in the clear enthusiasm for both worship and prayer, feedback is not used well enough to ensure that worship is making a significant impact on the spiritual development of children.

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

The strong Christian leadership of the executive headteacher, supported by the head of school, has ensured that there is a clear Christian vision, based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, supporting all the school does as a community of learners. This vision results in everyone being valued and encouraged to achieve the best they can and as a result the school has moved from a position of needing additional support to being judged as good by Ofsted last year. An experienced team of dedicated teachers, supported by caring teaching assistants, all are contributing to the progress of the school as a Christian place of learning, leading by example and providing excellent role models for the children. Leadership is not just found within the staff team: older children take responsibilities for younger children at lunch times and in worship as well as taking lunch time responsibilities for organising the dining hall clearing and staffing the reception desk. This distributed leadership results in a strong and cohesive staff team, confident and caring children and sense of belonging together, which supports personal and spiritual development to a high degree.

Members of the IEB and shadow governors (appointed to replace the IEB from September) are fully aware of the school's progress and strengths and committed to ensuring that the Christian ethos is central to the school. As a result, the school has secure Christian leadership linked to a recent partnership with a local church school. This partnership has enabled staff to share good practice and learn from each other and has supported staff to step into leadership roles with clear Christian values supporting future leadership.

Links with the local church are strong, the vicar is frequently at the school and is well known by the children. Staff attend diocesan events and the diocese has regular involvement through membership of the IEB which provides strong and clear support for the school and has worked to ensure that future leadership is secure.

The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.