



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Woodland Vale Road
St Leonards-on-sea
East Sussex
TTN37 6JJ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese:

Local authority: East Sussex
Dates of inspection: 5 November 2015
Date of last inspection: March 2010
School's unique reference number: 114572
Headteacher: Anne Hanney
Inspector's name and number: Cathy Slow 826

School context

Christ Church is a two form entry, multi-cultural, multi-faith primary school, in St Leonards, near Hastings. There are currently 414 children on roll and an additional 25 children in the nursery. The school is situated in an area with a high deprivation rank and high levels of pupil mobility. 41% of children are eligible for Pupil Premium. The school was judged "good" by Ofsted in March 2015.

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

- Christian values are deeply embedded in the daily life of the school and have a significant impact on the daily lives of the whole school community
- The leadership of the school, under a strong leadership team and a committed headteacher, provides a secure, safe and inspiring Christian place of learning
- Collective worship is an integral and influential part of school life, with strong support from the church
- Behaviour of children is of a high standard with excellent support for each pupil founded on respect and inclusivity
- Religious education is inspiring and highly valued by children and the wider community

Areas to improve

- Further embed the new assessment procedures, using assessment without levels, in Religious education, to enhance the contribution it makes to the life of every pupil
- Review the themes for collective worship to sustain the richness of the experience for all the school community
- Create innovative approaches to sharing the outstanding practice with other church schools both to further staff development and expertise and to support schools across

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

Christ Church school, despite being large, has a welcoming, caring and calm atmosphere. The Christian character, which is firmly woven through all the school does, contributes significantly to the academic achievement, confidence and individual development of all children. This is shown in the progress which children make in their time at the school, often from a below age related expectancy, to achieving at or above national average scores in reading writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2. Behaviour in lessons and around school is of a high level, enabling children to learn well and to feel safe. Children clearly enjoy coming to school and there is a positive but firm approach to attendance, using a wide range of strategies to support families and encourage children. One example is a 'Learn and Earn' shop where children earn points for attendance, which they can choose to spend on a selection of rewards. As a result, attendance is in line with the national average, despite the challenges some families face. The Christian character is evident in the high levels of respect shown by the staff for each other and the children. The positive relationships and nurture of every individual this fosters mean children have the confidence to express and share their views. Parents commented on the important contribution the school makes to their children's confidence and self-esteem and on how staff have been caring and supportive, really listening to their concerns. The school provides exceptionally well for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) which was recently described by Ofsted as 'the school's greatest strength'. Awe and wonder are at the heart of the curriculum, supported through an innovative and challenging programme of religious education. Very strong links with the local church and a very regular involvement of clergy ensures that spiritual experiences, founded on Christian values, are an intrinsic part of school life for all the community. In discussions, children showed a highly developed empathy for others who have different backgrounds or who are less fortunate. They have a strong record of raising money for charities, both local and for the link school in Sierra Leone, where money raised by the school has funded school buildings. They are fully aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith and the rich diversity at the school is a strength which enables children to learn with and from others who have different beliefs and cultures. There is a great sense of pride, shared by staff, parents, governors and children, in the distinctiveness of Christ Church, where all are welcomed and respected as individuals.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school says that worship at Christ Church school is encouraged as a way of life, not confined to the hall or to a single timetabled event. It is highly valued, with a strong Christian focus, making an outstanding contribution to the spiritual life of the school and the wider community. Leaders, including the headteacher, all staff, clergy and other members of the church, ensure that worship is distinctively Anglican with a focus on Jesus Christ, and accessible to all children. This is achieved by traditional liturgy combined with child focused prayer, hymns and role play. Children share in the planning of and are active participants in worship. It was especially evident, in a class based mass planned by Year 5 children with the priest, that there is a high level of spiritual awareness and enjoyment at being part of worship, shared by all the children, whether or not they have a Christian background. Very few parents chose to withdraw their child from worship, which is clear evidence of the accessibility of worship for all. The centre piece for worship is a beautiful wooden altar, where the school cross is placed, showing Jesus with open arms 'with his love for us all'. This focus creates a sense of reverence which was clearly seen in whole school worship. Planning, based on the Church's year, is thorough, reflective and involves children, both for worship in school and for Sunday mass in the local church. Regular and thorough evaluation, including pupil voice, ensures that there is continuity, enabling children to gain a thorough understanding of the seasons of the church year

and Christian festivals. Each week has a different Christian value focus which is also used in the classrooms, reinforcing the teaching. The school is exploring ways of incorporating new themes into worship to ensure it continues to be challenging, relevant and aspirational. The confidence that children have in participating in worship is clear and has a positive impact on their reading and speaking skills. Many children write their own prayers, often at home, supported by their families, and are keen to share these with others. Prayers that children had written for those suffering with Ebola, alongside photographs of the partner school in Sierra Leone, demonstrate their concerns for others. Children talked openly about how they were praying for everyone to recover and showed a highly developed awareness of the purpose of prayer and its value in their lives. One child said 'you don't have to talk to God in a loud or quiet voice, he just knows'. Christian Workers in Schools visit regularly and lead a weekly JAFFA (Jesus a Friend For All) club, which has high levels of attendance.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Standards of religious education (RE) are high, with school assessment showing that all children's achievement is at least good by the end of Key Stage 1 and often outstanding at the end of Year 6. The overall quality of the wide range of teaching observed on the day of the inspection was outstanding; with careful thought given to the content and the needs of individual children from a very wide range of starting points and cultural backgrounds. This resulted in all children being engaged with their learning and clearly enthusiastic in expressing their views, many of which were mature and showed great empathy. An example was in a Year 5 class, where children demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of pilgrimage with responses such as 'it's a chance to focus on God' and 'maybe you can't explain what it is'. Prior learning sheets are used to support children's learning at the correct level and individual support, used sensitively to avoid any child feeling singled out, ensures that gaps in learning are identified and filled. This is especially important as many children join the school in year groups throughout the school with differing levels of experience and prior knowledge of RE. The recent move to assessment without levels, using '2 build a profile' is enabling teachers to build a clearer picture of each child, leading to strong progress based on individual starting points. Learning for all is reinforced by revisiting the same areas to embed knowledge. Well planned, child centred teaching in the Early Years, based on recent Diocesan training, ensures that younger children are excited by RE from an early age. RE is not only taught in lessons but across the curriculum. Links with other subjects, particularly literacy, raise the profile of RE and reinforce the impact it has on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strong Christian focus is carefully balanced with teaching of other faiths, enabling children of all faiths and none to feel their contributions are valued. Children are encouraged to ask 'big questions' in a safe environment. The enthusiastic RE subject leader encourages staff development and recent Godly Play training has given staff greater confidence in their teaching. Home learning in RE has been very successful and children are clearly proud to share their work, which is displayed in classrooms and around the school, including models, art and prayers.

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

Leaders at Christ Church, guided by a passionate and caring headteacher, live out the school's explicit Christian vision of 'Learn from Me' from St Matthew's Gospel. All leaders can articulate the impact of the Christian ethos on the lives of the whole school community, including on academic standards and in particular, the school's clear strength of helping children to overcome any social or economic disadvantage in a strong, Christian, family community. The in-depth understanding the whole leadership team has of pupil progress, finances and strategic direction is exceptional and leads to a strong, shared vision and sense of direction. A high level of involvement of governors in school life, with a clear understanding of their strategic role, means there is an effective and supportive partnership between governors and staff. Governors have a rigorous, challenging approach based on mutual respect and a clear passion for all children

achieving their full potential. They agreed that what they want for the school is 'more of what we already have'. Parents also share this view and expressed a passion for the school and 'the Christ Church way' which they feel is central to their children's lives and impacts positively on their wellbeing and learning. A strong partnership between the Church and school and the frequent presence of the priest and other clergy in the school, provide valuable support for all and contribute significantly to the distinctive Christian vision so clearly evident. Links with the wider community, including with the partner school in Sierra Leone, bring the wider world into school and conversations with children demonstrate how well they understand complex issues in the local and global communities. Leadership is encouraged at all levels and older children share responsibility for caring for younger children, as well as other responsible jobs around the school, such as taking turns to be on the reception desk. Many staff have developed leadership skills during their time at Christ Church including supporting church schools locally and taking up leadership posts in other schools. It is clear that the school has a great deal to offer in sharing outstanding practice as a church school and views this as an exciting area to explore further. The school meets the statutory requirements for both collective worship and religious education.

SIAMS report November 2015 Christ Church CE VA Primary School St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6JJ