



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Wadhurst Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Sparrows Green
Wadhurst
TN5 6SR

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 27 November 2015

Date of last inspection: June 2010

School's unique reference number: 114532

Headteacher: Clare Vernon

Inspector's name and number: Cathy Slow 826

School context

Wadhurst school is situated in a large village with low levels of deprivation. There are currently 334 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are from a white British background and the number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, (SEND) is lower than the national average. Around 13% of children are in receipt of pupil premium. The headteacher was appointed in September 2013 and a new deputy and an inclusion manager were appointed in January 2014.

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

- The welcoming, warm and friendly environment where the Christian ethos clearly supports well-being
- Inclusive, well planned worship which promotes a secure sense of caring and spirituality and is clearly valued by the children
- Clear, passionate leadership from the headteacher, staff and governors, underpinned by Christian values, which secures good outcomes for all learners
- The high value placed on prayer which enables children to find a place for prayer in their daily lives

Areas to improve

- Include a wider range of different Christian traditions in worship to broaden the children's experience
- Enhance the work of the Stargazer group in leading worship to include more child led acts of worship

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

Explicit Christian values, selected annually by children, staff and governors, are embedded in the life of the school and form a secure basis for the whole community to grow together in a caring and inclusive place of learning where the Christian ethos, as Ofsted remarked, quietly permeates the work of the school. A different value is selected for each term and is the clearly Christian focus which runs through worship, religious education (RE) and prayer. For example, the current value of friendship has been used to encourage discussion on bullying in the recent anti-bullying week. As a result, children can describe what actions to take if they were feeling bullied and clearly understand their responsibility for helping and caring for others. They say they feel safe and happy in school. One child said “this is a very friendly school, it only takes two seconds to make a friend here”. The shared understanding of the strong Christian ethos, supported by the in depth focus on specific values, leads to a warm, caring and enabling environment where wellbeing is paramount and every child is valued. As a result children are happy, behaviour is good and they achieve well. There is a strong emphasis on enabling all children to be the best they can with excellent support for children with SEND. All are encouraged to be independent learners and given responsibilities which support this, such as looking after others as prefects, play leaders and as Stargazers, a group who plan worship and lead prayers. Children talk openly about what being a church school means to them, “we look after each other because Jesus loves us”. There is strong support for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development through the exploration of Christian values in worship which are further explored in RE and through modelling from all staff and older children. The whole school, especially year 6 fundraisers, are involved in frequent fund raising for local charities and the link school, Mwumba Primary, in Burundi. Children talked with pride about the success of a recent disco in raising a large amount of money for the children they sponsor at Mwumba school. This is an area where children take a lead. They are clear that it is important to help others, especially those who are less fortunate, and have initiated fund raising in response to situations in the local community. Parents feel that the Christian ethos means there is “added input” for all children and describe the school as welcoming, tolerant and inclusive.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is an integral part of the school day where the school’s Christian values, children’s prayers and celebrations of what children achieve are brought together in distinctively Anglican worship. Worship is inclusive and engages all the children through music and children’s participation. It is supported by Makaton signing for the main prayers and words of the hymns and school songs to enable all children to participate. Makaton signs are displayed around the school to support their use in worship. The termly focus on one value, currently friendship, enables children to explore thoroughly what the value means to them and to apply this in their own lives. This is clearly shown in the children’s prayers, in their caring and supportive attitudes to each other and the great enthusiasm of the Stargazers who contribute to planning worship, with staff and the vicar, and meet weekly to write prayers and reflect on the worship themes. They also link worship with their classes by finding out about other children’s views of worship and what they would like the group to pray for. Stargazers take turns to open worship, to share the peace and to end with traditional Anglican dismissal of “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”. This is a particularly poignant message in whole school afternoon worship where these are the closing words of the school day. Foundation governors talked about how they feel it makes a difference to children to end the day with this blessing and staff commented on the difference it makes to the behaviour of children who leave school settled by the reflective time that afternoon worship provides. The responsibility for leading parts of worship and sharing prayer is one which the children take very seriously. The way this impacts on the children is clear in discussions with them about worship and prayer and how they value being involved. One child said they wanted to be involved “even if I feel scared because it’s important and I want to get it right”. The Trinity is part of school worship and children talk about God the Father and Jesus, as well as having an awareness of the Holy Spirit through reflection and quiet

prayer. Children talked about how often they pray, some linked this to the five times a day prayers in Islam and one child said “you can pray anytime, all day if you want to”. Children have a great enthusiasm for talking about prayer, the difference it makes in their lives can be seen in the prayers they write for others, for themselves and for worship, linked to Bible stories. These prayers are shared around the school, in reflection areas in classrooms and in the prayer box by the entrance. Weekly class reflection times are used to secure the impact of the week’s worship as well as to enable children to reflect, to ask “big questions” and to think about the difference it has made.

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

There is a strong, enthusiastic and cohesive leadership team, with a clear focus on improvement underpinned by the school’s Christian vision resulting in exceptional support for well-being and learning. The impact of the new leadership team, under the guidance of a caring, committed head, and the implementation of the action plan following the “good” Ofsted last year, can be seen around the school as well as in recent attainment data. Pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium are well supported through a range of well-planned and evaluated strategies leading to strong outcomes. There is a middle leadership post for worship which raises the profile of worship and ensures that it is central to the school’s planning and development. The leaders of worship and RE are very focused on evaluation and impact. Both worship and RE are frequently reviewed to ensure that children are engaged and asking “big questions” about themselves and their place in their community and the wider world. Partnership between the school and the local church is strong, the vicar is very involved in school life, leading weekly worship and contributing to planning and evaluation. Children visit the church for the main Christian festivals and through other groups such as Brownies, often accompanied by parents. Governors are very involved with the school, they know the school well and are clear about the difference that the Christian ethos makes to the school and the community. They describe the school’s leadership as “a journey together”, and of being part of a strong team with the head at the heart of all that the school achieves. Leaders ensure that there are strong and exciting links with the local community, such as a local composer writing music for the children’s war poems and visits to local art exhibitions leading to art projects in the school. These links broaden the children’s experience and involve the community in sharing and enhancing school life. The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

SIAMS report November 2015 Wadhurst School, Wadhurst, TN5 6SR