



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### West Dean Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

West Dean,  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO18 0RJ

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**Diocese: Chichester**

Local authority: West Sussex

Dates of inspection: 19 April 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2009

School's unique reference number: 126004

Headteacher: Gillian Moss

Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Appleby 749

#### School context

West Dean CE Primary School is smaller than the average size primary school in a rural setting with 99 pupils on roll. The majority of the pupils come from outside of the school catchment area. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average as is the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attendance is above the national average. Most pupils come from a white British heritage.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of West Dean CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The school's Christian ethos has a positive impact on pupil's behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Effective links with the local parish church and the local community ensure that the school is seen as central to West Dean village life.
- The Christian vision and commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors is reflected in their resolve to build on current strengths as a church school.

#### Areas to improve

- Improve the process of self-evaluation of the school as a church school, so that formal evaluations include all aspects of the school's distinctiveness that gather robust evidence of the impact of the school's Christian foundation over time.
- Develop opportunities for global studies, so that learner's increase their awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.
- Ensure that the school's core Christian values are fully communicated to all the school community to enable them to articulate confidently the distinctly Christian characteristics that influence daily life and learning.

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

West Dean CE school provides a high level of nurture and care to its school community through a strong Christian ethos of love and respect. The school effectively provides an inclusive environment where the needs of all pupils are met. Parents value the 'nurturing school promoting personal growth' and the pupils value the school because 'no-one judges you' and 'you get to show your religion and learn more about it'. Parents cherish being part of a 'big family' which is reinforced through the school's statement in the entrance lobby that 'when you enter this loving school, consider yourself one of the special members of an extraordinary family'. Links between this statement and how it promotes a distinctly Christian ethos have not been made clear. West Dean has adopted 15 values as Christian values which underpin the daily life of their school. These are displayed in the hall and in the corridor and are discussed annually as part of a training day with staff and governors. The school community is clear that 'respect' and 'love for one another' are core Christian values within school, that 'shine out and are reflected in learning behaviours', but is not secure in articulating an understanding of the other Christian values and how these impact on daily life. The school has identified the need to improve pupil's understanding to enable them to increase their explicit articulation of spirituality and Christian values. The school community is committed to a Christian ethos which is currently implicit rather than explicit. For example the school creed, mission statement and governors charter do not explicitly reflect the school's Christian foundation. However, they do effectively focus on respect and valuing everyone for the contributions that they make to the life of the school. The Christian ethos contributes to pupil achievement which current data indicates is above national average. Religious education (RE) contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural (SMSC) growth. Pupils learn about religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism and can talk about some of the differences between religion and spirituality. Pupils know that learning about other religions helps them to respect others and through this work pupils have empathy for other cultures. Pupils fundraise for unicef, sports relief, and run their own popular community cafe. They understand that raising money for charity helps people 'less fortunate than us' and some pupils can relate this to Christian values of friendship and justice. Displays around the school of Bibles, holding crosses, a friendship tree, prayers and building a cairn of hop make a good contribution to SMSC through reinforcing Christian symbolism.

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

Collective worship is a distinct time within the school day when topics such as saints, parables, the Trinity and values are communicated to pupils. Pupils value this time because they can 'connect with God'. Pupils are respectful when listening to Bible stories such as the good Samaritan. Aspects of Anglican worship such as gathering, reciting the Lord's Prayer, lighting a candle and use of an altar which reflects the church year, are well established. There are some opportunities for reflection in worship but these are not always sufficient to give pupils enough time to reflect deeply and discuss topics. Therefore many pupils are unable to communicate clearly how worship and biblical material impact on their lives. Pupils experience a wide range of worship experiences, both in and out of school, which leads to curiosity and debate about different Anglican traditions and this increases their knowledge. For example, a debate with their local vicar about why some worship in churches was led by two clergy instead of one, resulted in discussions about 'high' and 'low' churches. The quality of pupils' personal prayer writing is developing, although some pupils are unclear about the use of the thought boxes in their prayer corners. Prayer areas in each class celebrate Christian symbolism and pupils are often invited to read a Bible or write a prayer in these areas. The local parish church of St Andrew contributed money for the purchase of holding crosses in each class which are effectively used for pupil's personal prayer and reflection. The holding cross prayer card suggests biblical references that can be used. The services at St Andrew's church celebrating Christingle and Y6 leavers are very well attended by parents and services at the church appropriately reinforce Anglican tradition and increase understanding of the Christian year. Pupils are 'really

really excited' when they visit St Andrew's church and make quality scrap books after their visit which they are proud to share with visitors. Staff and clergy regularly lead worship and pupils lead their class worships. Pupils have opportunities to develop their understanding of the Trinity and can name God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit as being important. The person of Jesus Christ is evident in worship and pupils state that 'He is our connection with God'. The planning of worship involves the headteacher, incumbent and another local headteacher. Governors often attend worship and verbally feed back to the governing body. Evaluation of worship is mainly informal and does not contribute to the school development plan, but has led to the inclusion of a prayer wall in the hall and in the organisation of how pupils sit for worship.

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

The headteacher, staff team and the governing body articulate a Christian vision for the whole school community. They have been proactive in addressing the key issues from the previous inspection. Governors now take a key role in the parochial parish council (PCC) which has visited the school and discussed their role with the school council. Systems for monitoring and evaluation of the Christian foundation are not sufficiently formalized to identify areas for future improvement and are not yet an explicit and integral part of the overall school development plan. For example, the school development plan does not have action points specifically related to the Christian distinctiveness of the school but does consider the development of the consultation process regarding church school effectiveness. Governors are committed to the Christian ethos and support the school well. They make visits to worship and school events although evaluation of these visits is mostly informal. Governors have begun to use a formal evaluation sheet which includes an explicit question regarding the effectiveness of the school in promoting Christian values and embracing the teaching and life of Jesus. Currently there is insufficient evidence of the impact of these evaluations. Governors individually attend training provided by the Diocese and feedback to the Governing Body. During interviews candidates are questioned about their commitment to the school's Christian distinctiveness to ensure that the school appoints staff committed to promoting a Christian ethos. Partnerships with the local community, parents and the church enrich learners' experiences. The church provides a prayer group for parents and pupils' work is displayed in the church. A focus group of parents, governors and staff have met to consider the Christian foundation of the school. The RE leader is experienced in supporting staff to deliver RE provision across the school and pupils receive effective RE provision that enhances their SMSC education. The high standards of pastoral care and the development of a calm and focussed learning environment make an important contribution to pupils' progress. This helps them to achieve their best. Pupils are involved in decision making through pupil conferencing and the school council. Parents complete questionnaires that involve them in effecting change on the Christian dimension of the school. They speak warmly of the school and the family ethos of the school where their children learn to make 'right decisions through how Jesus lived his life'. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

SIAMS report April 2016 West Dean Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School PO18  
ORJ