

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

| Fordcombe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School | |
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| Fordcombe Green, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 0RY | |
| Current SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Diocese | Rochester |
| Previous SIAMS inspection grade | Outstanding |
| Date of inspection | 1 February 2017 |
| Date of last inspection | 23 January 2012 |
| Type of school and unique reference number | Primary 118719 |
| Headteacher | Christopher Blackburn |
| Inspector's name and number | Niki Paterson 883 |

School context

Fordcombe is a small school which serves a rural area on the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells in Kent. There are 97 pupils on roll, the vast majority of whom are White British. The number of pupils on the special educational needs register and those in receipt of pupil premium funding are both below the national average. There have been changes in headship since the previous denominational inspection and a high changeover in staff. The school was graded as good by Ofsted in February 2016.

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

- A clear Christian vision underpinned by explicit and by implicit Christian values pervades both the physical environment and the working practice of the school.
- Collective worship is highly valued by the whole community, including parents, and has been developed by excellent practice using pupil voice evaluation.
- Recognition of each child's inherent worth results in high aspirations and celebration of pupils' unique gifts and talents.
- Children are nurtured as leaders ensuring that they confidently articulate and live out the Christian values of the school.

Areas to improve

- Embed assessment and differentiation in religious education (RE) so that there is challenge for all learners.
- Develop a coherent and centralised system of planning and modifying collective worship so that practice remains consistently effective and involves a range of stakeholders.

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

The school embodies explicit and deeply embedded Christian values of love, hope, honesty, respect, forgiveness and perseverance which permeate both the curriculum and the physical environment. Permanent scripture and inspirational quotations line the walls, expressing the values. This allows opportunities for the community to reflect upon their spiritual meaning on both a personal level and in conversation on a daily basis. Parents have high levels of engagement with the school's distinctive vision, for example by preparing prayer boxes for the children and by running extra-curricular clubs such as 'Explore the Bible'. Both parents and pupils value the welcoming and hospitable ethos extended to those new to the school. One parent described her child as being 'hugged back to life' upon becoming a member of the school community. Pupils and school leaders can clearly articulate how the school's values, in particular the values of hope, honesty and trust, have secured better outcomes for pupils and drive forward school improvement. In one classroom, pupils have 'values pebbles' to hold while they are working to help to inspire their learning. This results in academic progress which is recognized by Ofsted as good and attainment which is above national average. Extensive and creative spaces, such as the library prayer tree and the outdoor spiritual garden, allow pupils to be expressive and reflective. When combined with opportunities for musicianship and sport, there is a clear sense of how the school values the spirit of the whole child and how social, moral, spiritual, and cultural (SMSC) education is embedded within the school's ethos. Prayer and reflection are meaningful and relevant to the pupils' daily lives because they make regular use of the prominent and engaging prayer spaces in every classroom and in communal areas. These have been well developed to involve the parents who also value the opportunity to pray for the school using the pupils written words and thoughts. School leaders have high aspirations for pupils and use the schools values as a vehicle for nurturing the whole child. Pupils describe how their value of respect helps them to know how to look after one another and to live well together. As a result, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils are exemplary. Warm and caring relationships exist at all levels between staff, who feel highly valued by the school leadership team including by governors. Religious education (RE) has a high profile. Trips to the local mosque and to the gurdwara encourage pupils to explore diversity beyond their immediate community. This means that successful links exist between Christian teaching and pupils' understanding of and respect for other faiths.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Distinctively Christian collective worship, which has a strong focus on the teaching and inspiration of Jesus, is made bespoke to the needs of the school and is highly valued by the community. Pupils take part enthusiastically, and are enthused by the creative and interactive approaches to worship. A well-established and popular school choir ensures that sung praise is a spiritual and uplifting experience. Pupils are well developed as leaders of worship. For example, parents talked about how confidently the pupils lead key festival worship such as harvest in the church, from beginning to end. Christian values are integral to the content of worship, which is informed by Diocesan planning and by other resources rooted in biblical teaching. However, planning is not carried out cohesively which means that the involvement in planning of other stakeholders, such as governors, is limited. Pupils are able to express an understanding of the Trinity as 'God in three forms' and can talk about how this is symbolised. Pupils are familiar with Anglican tradition, being well versed in the Lord's prayer and in liturgical responses. A variety of Christian festivals is attended by the whole school community, both at church and in school, which means that pupils have a secure knowledge of the Christian calendar. Regular monitoring of worship is carried out by a range of stakeholders, including children, and is particularly effective in improving practice. Pupils talked about how valued they feel when their ideas and suggestions become part of worshipping community practice. Opportunities for open, impromptu prayer is encouraged which enables pupils to engage on a personal level.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The RE curriculum, which is informed by diocesan planning, ensures that pupils have a good quality of provision. The majority of lessons are well pitched and demonstrate that attainment and progress are in line with other subjects. However, challenge for the more able is not yet evident in all year groups. Highly effective professional development, from both the diocese and within the school, has resulted in teaching which is usually good and occasionally outstanding. Pupils' understanding of Christianity is strong and RE is used well as a vehicle for exploring the school values. Staff subject knowledge is good and there is a genuine passion and enthusiasm amongst teachers

for this subject. Staff are sensitive to the range of personal beliefs within their classroom which means that challenging conversation are fostered and explored confidently. For example, in a lesson observed in Year 6, in which pupils were discussing the challenges of wearing religious clothing, there was a fruitful and trustful conversation about how a child of no faith felt about wearing a cross on his school uniform. Pupils say that they value the opportunity to freely express their ideas and are encouraged to be reflective through the use of RE journals. Pupils enjoy learning about other faiths and this is well supported by visits to diverse places of worship available in the local area. However, pupils' knowledge of Christianity as a worldwide religion is not yet secure. The RE leader is recent to the post but is being well supported through training with the diocese and by being given time to monitor and develop the subject. This has led to a more structured system of assessment being put into practice although the impact of this is not yet established.

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

School leaders and governors clearly express a shared vision of the school's Christian distinctiveness which is rooted in the life of the community which they serve. The vision states that every child is 'loved by God and created in His image' and that each child is 'uniquely created with gifts and talents'. This has supported a continuous upward trend in academic standards and has closed the gaps for disadvantaged pupils. Both staff and pupils readily articulate the school's particular values as a driver for improving learning underpinned by the importance of putting their trust and hope in God. A strong relationship with the parish church is clearly evidenced through the active role of the priest who regularly leads collective worship. Good communication with parents about the school's values means that they are highly supportive of the school's distinctive ethos. The school embodies its value of love to its local and to the wider global community by regularly supporting local projects and Christian charities chosen by the pupils. This, in turn, supports pupils' understanding of the links between Christian values and SMSC learning. The headteacher and the RE leader have developed significantly in their capacity and effectiveness through the embedding of the values as drivers for school improvement. Their roles are well supported by professional development at diocesan and national level. Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been well addressed. A continuous cycle of reflective and insightful self-evaluation incorporates a range of stakeholder views, including those of pupils and parents. Focused and robust monitoring by leaders and governors, underpinned by the school's value of honesty, has brought about rapid school improvement and is clearly linked to the school's vision. Statutory requirements for the provision of RE and collective worship are met.

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