



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Laddingford St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Darman Lane, Maidstone, ME18 6BL

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Kent

Dates of inspection: 16 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 23 March 2011

School's unique reference number: 118637

Headteacher: Gemma Brain

Inspector's name and number: Niki Paterson.

Quality Assurance inspector name and number : Derek Holloway (93)

School context

Laddingford St Mary's is a small rural village primary with 80 pupils on roll. Pupils come to the school from the village and beyond. 10% of pupils are from Irish or Gypsy Roma Traveller background. The number of pupils who have special educational needs or who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2016 following a short period of interim leadership by another headteacher. The local parish church adjoins the school and is used as the school hall. The church is without a substantive priest.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Laddingford St Mary's as a Church of England school are good.

- Passionate, creative and distinctively Christian leadership is effectively modelled by the newly appointed headteacher
- The role of the governing body in securing, monitoring and evaluating the school Christian character has improved significantly since the last inspection
- Distinctive Christian values are evident throughout the environment and are well understood by a range of stakeholders
- The Christian character of the school is clearly communicated to the wider school community and is highly valued by parents

Areas to improve

- Develop shared understanding of spirituality and ensure this is reflected in curriculum planning across the whole school
- Involve a range of stakeholders including pupils, in the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship so that it clearly meets the needs of the school community
- Embed and monitor the impact of the newly developed values so that there is sustained improvement in achievement across the curriculum

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

Distinctive Christian values of trust, compassion, peace and endurance have been recently developed by a range of stakeholders to meet the needs of the school. In a recent 'arts week', staff, parents and pupils worked together to create banners for the hall which expressed their understanding of the values. The values are creatively displayed across the environment and well-articulated by the whole community. As a result, there is an improved understanding of the school's distinctive ethos. This is an area from the last inspection which has been effectively addressed. Links are beginning to be made between the values and positive learning behaviours. For example, one pupil described that although he found writing difficult; the Noah's Ark story inspired him to show more endurance. Whilst pupils and leaders recognise how the school's values can help pupils learn, it is too soon for this to make an overall impact on academic outcomes. The vast majority of pupils make expected progress but only a small percentage make better than expected progress. Compassion, forgiveness and love are demonstrated by a cohesive staff team who go 'above and beyond' to support all pupils. For example, staff make extra time to work with parents and tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individual pupils who might otherwise find school challenging. This has resulted in improved attendance and increased levels of engagement. Pupil behaviour is good both in lessons and in the playground. Pupils talk of how they use the values of peace and trust to resolve any conflict or misunderstandings. There are some opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) provided through religious education (RE), collective worship, reflection areas and charitable fundraising. There is less evidence of spirituality in other areas of the curriculum. There is no clear articulation of what spirituality means in the school community and as a result provision is patchy. RE is prioritised so that it makes a secure contribution to the Christian character. Most pupils have an age appropriate understanding of Christianity as a worldwide religion and they enjoy learning about other faiths. Pupils are respectful of diversity. They recognize the importance of RE in helping them to live well together and its role in combatting racism.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is satisfactory

Christian collective worship is recognized as central to the life of the school and is valued by the school community. The school has welcomed support from part time clergy from the local benefice and a local Christian organization called the Family Trust. A recent joint service with church parishioners to celebrate the Queen's Birthday has been successful in engaging whole families with the local church. Parents, who are also invited to attend other school worship, say they value services like this as they are integral in developing a sense of community. However, the regular planning of daily worship is basic and not fully designed to reflect the values of the school. Links are made between biblical teachings and how it impacts on daily life but opportunities for reflection upon the model of Jesus Christ are not fully explored. Pupils show reverence, are attentive and enjoy times of praise. Their input is limited to adult directed activities and consequently, their role as leaders of worship is underdeveloped. Some pupils say they wish they were more fully involved. Two previous inspections have recommended that pupils should be involved in the evaluation of worship. The school has taken recent steps to address this but this does not yet impact on planning or outcomes. Governors do have a clear purpose to monitoring and this is beginning to have an impact. An example of this is pupils' improved understanding and articulation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This was identified by governors as a weakness and successfully addressed by the school leadership. Pupils are familiar with Anglican tradition, liturgy and prayer. They begin with worship with responses such 'The Lord be with you, And also with you' and the Lord's Prayer is said daily. Personal prayer is encouraged through values -led reflection spaces in each classroom. Other opportunities to understand and develop spirituality, such as periods of silence, are missed.

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

The headteacher and governing body have a clear and cohesive understanding of what it means to be a church school. They have taken swift action to prioritise RE and collective worship and to develop and promote a distinctively Christian ethos. The values and vision of the school are clearly expressed through its website and in communication to parents but are not yet explicit in any of the schools policies. With exception of established pupil involvement in collective worship, Governors have addressed recommendations from previous inspections. Leaders have clear priorities for the development of the whole child as well as achievement, well-being and behaviour. They have a good understanding through self-evaluation of general school performance and have begun to articulate how school improvement can be driven effectively by the school values. An example of this is the school 'Behaviour Principles' which are shared with the whole school community to demonstrate how the values underpin positive attitudes to learning. Leaders have put systems in place to ensure a common language which refers to the school values. As a result there is an improved understanding of how the values relate to everyday life. For example, pupils are praised and rewarded for demonstrating particular values in their behavior towards one another. Leaders have been proactive in ensuring that links with the parish and its church are being maintained during the absence of a substantive priest. They have successfully raised the profile and perception of the Christian character of the school within the local community. The school engages regularly with support from the Diocese by accessing support for RE leadership and development for the head as the leader of a church school. Leaders have a secure understanding of how RE should be taught and are taking steps to improve outcomes for pupils. Parents are very supportive the school's Christian values and the open way in which the pupils are encouraged to explore personal faith. They engage well with Christian celebrations and appreciate the school's hospitable ethos and open door policy. One parent described the school as a 'warm, inclusive family where children are accepted just as they are'. RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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