



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### **Firle Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

The Street  
Firle  
East Sussex  
BN8 6LF

**Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory**

**Current inspection grade: Good**

**Diocese: Chichester**

Local authority: East Sussex  
Dates of inspection: 17 March 2016  
Date of last inspection: 3 December 2009  
School's unique reference number: 114525  
Headteacher: Annie Noble  
Inspector's name and number: Connie Hughes 765

#### **School context**

Firle CE Primary is a small rural school in a designated area of outstanding national beauty. There are 94 pupils on roll, divided into four classes. Pupils are mainly white British from the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above the national average. There have been significant headteacher and staff changes since the last inspection with reduced leadership capacity in the school. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2014. The school has close links to St Peter's, their local church, and the parishes of Glynde and Beddingham.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Firle as a Church of England school are good**

- The school's Christian ethos nurtures the development of the whole child, enabling them all to feel personally valued, happy and secure.
- Collective worship and religious education (RE) have contributed to pupils' good knowledge and understanding of Christianity, the Bible, world faiths and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The committed leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by the governors, has embedded the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- The established partnership between the school, church and community is a significant strength in celebrating the school's Christian foundation.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Provide structured learning experiences in classroom reflective areas to enable pupils to link explicitly and reflect on prayer and the Christian values found in the gospel stories.
- Secure teacher subject knowledge in RE, so that the quality of learning is sustained during a period of change.
- Through the foundation governors' self-evaluation role, secure further evidence of the link between the school's chosen values and the gospel of Christ to reinforce their centrality in the school Christian distinctiveness.

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

An eye catching display in the school entrance hall, with an emphasis on “Love one another as God has loved us”, signifies the centrality of the Christian faith in the life of the community. The school motto ‘Achieve, Believe, and Celebrate’ is underpinned by Christian and British values. Key Stage 2 pupils confidently articulate, “Christian values make you feel good about yourself...positive about your learning...respecting people’s differences...this how we all live in our school.” Not all pupils have a secure understanding of the explicit link between these values and the gospel stories. Through the inspiring and informative Christian environment, RE and collective worship, pupils are successfully developing a breadth of knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith in the daily life of the school. Cross-curricular themes, RE, worship, school events and charitable activities within the local community and internationally impact strongly on pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils explain, “we celebrate our differences,” are proud to say “it’s good to be me” and value being given the choice to “reflect at the end of a busy day”. RE is a core subject, primarily led and delivered in all classes by a designated teacher. Year 1 and 2 pupils currently benefit from a specially trained Godly Play leader from a local church. Pupils have a good understanding of world faiths through RE, visitors and school visits, including to a mosque in Brighton. RE is enjoyed by pupils who make good progress within age-related expectations. Pupils are encouraged to participate with confidence and achieve personal success in a wide range of activities including a ‘Gospel Singing Schools’ Workshop’ with a nationally acclaimed adult choir. The established partnership, ‘Working with Others’ with Brighton University provides motivating and creative learning activities across class groups. A range of visitors, including City Mission for the homeless in Brighton, Shoe Box Appeal and the Christian charity Starfish Malawi, extend pupils’ experience of global diversity. The progress of all pupils is improving; as a result of the commitment of leaders and staff, positive relationships and the setting of appropriate levels of challenge and support. There is further work to be done around consistently pitching activities at the right level to challenge pupils of all different abilities.

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

Daily Christian worship is led by the headteacher, parish clergy, staff, foundation governors, pupils and visitors. A colourful, vibrant and informative display in the form of a large clock in the hall gives the pupils clear guidance on the major festivals and celebrations in the Anglican church calendar. A planned themed approach to worship has a strong focus on the life of Jesus Christ and ties in with the church’s year, combining core Christian values, biblical teaching, world issues, songs/hymns and prayer. All pupils and staff are encouraged to reflect on personal belief and behaviours, community and world-wide events in life. Well established relationships with the local church of St Peter’s, including clergy and parishioners as spiritual leaders, provide good worship, prayer guidance and support. Pupils and families attend church to celebrate the major Christian festivals. Worship, supported by RE teaching, enhances pupils’ spiritual understanding, experience of and participation in Anglican practices. Key Stage 2 pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the Trinity, the symbolism of candles and the use of liturgical responses. Studying the Apostles Creed, Holly class pupils compared how the example of Jesus impacted on their personal beliefs and values, “We believe in love and friendship, in trusting and supporting each other”. The use of prayer in pupils’ daily life is strong and includes The Lord’s Prayer, saying Grace at lunchtime and using their own fingers and thumbs to pray. Pupils speak confidently of the importance of prayer, but classroom reflection areas are not fully utilised to support and develop personal spirituality. Foundation governors comment positively on pupils’ enjoyment of and reflective engagement with worship, but although pupils’ own views and evaluations of collective worship are sought and acted upon, this is not yet sufficiently embedded.

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

There have been a number of significant senior leadership and staff changes since the last SIAMS inspection. Guided by the headteacher, the school governors are determined to bring about significant improvement in the church school ethos so the faith foundation of the school is becoming well-embedded in the daily life of the school. School leaders have become more articulate in how they demonstrate and promote an explicit Christian vision and have identified the need to celebrate the school's faith foundation with new parents and the wider community as a whole. The school's website and all documentation clearly reflect the Christian vision and mission of a church school. Parents explain that the school is "living it rather than preaching it" on a daily basis. All staff are excellent role models and the Christian ethos of the school is reflected in the comments of the community: "Pupils are well nurtured in their faith" and "all the children are considerate of others, well-mannered and well-behaved." Regular focused meetings between senior leaders, foundation governors and the parish priest have enabled the school to share expertise, develop self-evaluation strategies and shape the school's distinctive Christian character. The foundation governor's action group are gaining a higher profile within the school. Their monitoring and evaluation of the impact of collective worship and RE on the daily lives of all pupils has identified actions needed to secure the impact of the schools' Christian distinctiveness. Foundation governors and subject leaders work well together. For example, a recent RE moderation, in collaboration with a Brighton church school, is securing consistency in teacher's use of assessment, pupil progress and achievement. The headteacher, RE subject leader and teachers engage with the diocese and a consultant CE Headteacher, to consolidate the school's Christian distinctiveness. This focus on Church school leadership, collective worship and RE professional development, has enhanced leaders' and staff knowledge and expertise.

There is a strong partnership between the school, home and parish church. Close collaboration with parents, St Peter's church and members of the parishes of Glynde and Beddingham underpin the well-being of the whole school community. A breadth of information on the school website and parent and parish newsletters, embrace the school's Christian foundation in the community. For example, sharing of the term's chosen Christian value in worship, celebrating the children identified by their peers as 'Value Champion' of the week and Christian festival celebrations. An active Friends of Firle group lead activities such as pancake races and Easter activities. Parents overwhelmingly praise the school for their "nurturing, kind and caring Christian values" The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.

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