



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### East Hoathly Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Marks Lane,  
East Hoathly, Lewes  
BN8 6EQ

**Previous inspection grade: Satisfactory**

**Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: Chichester**

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 25 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 18 May 2010

School's unique reference number: 114501

Headteacher: James Procter

Inspector's name and number: Ruth Cumming 865

#### School context

East Hoathly is a smaller than average size school. Since the last inspection the school has been through a number of significant changes including federation with another local primary school. The head of school has recently been promoted to executive headteacher of both schools in the federation. The federation has a single governing body. Last year the school adopted their on-site nursery school into the federation. The majority of pupils are white British heritage. The number on roll has risen over recent years and the nursery is over subscribed.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of East Hoathly as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Deeply embedded Christian values are clearly articulated by all members of the school community and impact on all areas of school life.
- Children enjoy high level spiritual and moral reflection to which they respond with confidence.
- The executive headteacher, working closely with all members of his team, has created a strong Christian vision which has significantly driven forward the school's Christian distinctiveness.

#### Area to improve

- Develop children's understanding of the breadth of Christianity as a global faith so that they appreciate the rich variety of different Christian traditions and the way that this is expressed through worship.

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

The Christian character of the school is outstanding because the Christian vision is deeply embedded in school life. Christian values are woven through the curriculum and make a considerable impact on the children's well-being and relationships. Twelve core values, including forgiveness, truthfulness and compassion, form the core of the school's vision and children have a deep understanding that these values have meaning and purpose in their own lives. This is enhanced because children interpret each value for themselves. The school's values significantly impact on children's behaviour and their relationships. One child summed up forgiveness as 'respecting their apology' and another explained humility as being 'when you don't show off just to impress people.' Children enthusiastically sing their own 'Vision song' which highlights each value. One parent commented 'I love the vision. This school stands for respect and truthfulness. They raise good, kind people with a strong sense of community.' Behaviour in school is exemplary with children working together and helping one another. There are very clear expectations which grow out of the school values of humility and forgiveness and which are modelled by staff. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education is strong. The school offers a rich and wonderful variety of learning opportunities to inspire children and encourage them to attend school. A sense of compassion led to Playground Pals being appointed to ensure nobody feels lonely at playtimes. All members of the school are committed to helping each other to excel by enabling one another to improve both academically and in their personal development and well-being. The expertise of the rector is appreciated in shaping 'Awe and Wonder' days to enrich children's spiritual development with creative exciting activities. These days support the on-going spiritual experiences children enjoy through worship, the outdoor environment and learning opportunities. High expectations from staff in religious education (RE) stretch children's thinking and enable them to explore particular attributes; such as having the courage to change their views. RE is well planned, builds on concepts and follows an exciting enquiry approach. The rector supports the teachers to develop the children's understanding of Christianity. A link with a Church school in India is being established, but currently children's understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is limited. An understanding and respect for diverse communities is nurtured through a rich and varied curriculum.

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

Collective worship is inspirational and inclusive. It is inspirational because of the quality and depth of thought which the children put into participating and leading worship. Children have an extremely mature ability to unpick the central messages which they deliver. This enables the rest of the school to understand the messages and creates powerful challenge. Worship is inclusive because of the emphasis the school places on children's ownership and involvement. It is truly inspirational when these two elements are woven together and makes a significant impact on the children's learning and behaviour. Together with prayers and creative opportunities, such as drama, worship provides a richness of experience which makes a significant contribution to the children's development. The Bible is central to collective worship with carefully chosen readings to support the focus topic. Children enjoy the challenging activities presented in 'Open the Book' worship led by members of the church community. This supports children's understanding of the centrality of Jesus in the Christian faith. Drama work and the use of illustrations enable pupils to understand the Trinity. One child described the Trinity as 'three in one' with their own pictorial image and a prompt for each person. Pupils leading worship skilfully interpret biblical values and elicit responses from their peers which inspire them to apply these values to their lives. Older children use drama illustrations to communicate how behaviour choices not only affect the person making the

choice, but all those around. Persuasively, one child reasoned with other children in the school, 'if you tell the truth people can help you feel better and help sort things out.' Worship includes a rich assortment of traditional prayers and children's own prayers, biblical readings, drama and visual illustrations, punctuated with Anglican practice. Parents report that children are not observers, enjoy being involved and are pleased to participate. The rector, who is highly regarded by the community, provides opportunities for children and the community to come together. He has worked with staff to enhance worship experiences in a very supportive way. This is an excellent example of mutual trust between church and school. Initiatives such as Mothering Sunday and providing opportunities for parents to meet in the church are good examples of the church's involvement in school life and parents respond very positively to these opportunities. School worship is thoughtfully planned and supported by the children's RE Council and Ethos Committee. Children use reflection areas to write prayers for use in worship, to reflect on, respond to and give feedback on worship. This feedback is acted upon and has led to more drama. A variety of places around school are occasionally used for worship, however most worship is held in the parish church, strongly connecting the school with the local community.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church are outstanding**

Despite all the changes in the recent past, at its core the school has a strong vision which has enabled it to become what it is now. The inspirational executive head and talented team of governors consistently and confidently articulate and promote a distinctive Christian vision. The whole school worked together to form this vision based on biblical principles and this has created a strong, united team of staff. The vision has been interpreted by children, giving them a good depth of understanding. 'Strong values and moral issues are addressed daily,' a parent explained, 'it's what makes you a decent person'. Parents and the community make impressive contributions to the school through their support and expertise, not least in charity fund raising events. The school's performance and distinctiveness is strongly led with effective strategies for improvement which impact on the SMSC development of all children. The school has a wide range of approaches to self-evaluation, from regular dialogue to formal reports. These are effectively used by school leaders to identify improvements which continually take the school forward. This has built trust and enables staff to lead imaginatively and effectively. The very positive effect of 'growing leaders' is facilitated by strategic planning. Governors are highly skilled and systematic in their approach to monitoring and this robust structure ensures reports include 'way forward' comments which are meticulously followed up. This enables rapid and carefully targeted improvement which keeps the school's effectiveness as a church school high on the agenda. Extremely high expectations are set for everyone throughout the school. Leaders demonstrate the value of compassion by enabling all children and staff to be successful. Positive partnerships are at the heart of the school: trust has been established between the school, church and community. Initial links are being formed with a school in India to enable children to have a greater understanding of Christianity as a global community. RE and worship meet statutory arrangements, are of a high standard and are central to the school. A girl in Year 6, explained, 'This school makes me feel strong because Jesus supports me.'

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