



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Lewes Road
Ditchling
Hassocks
East Sussex
BN6 8TU

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 7 March 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2010

School's unique reference number: 114500

Headteacher: Susan Thompson

Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Appleby 749

School context

Ditching (St Margaret's) CE Primary School is a smaller than the average size primary school in a rural setting with 141 pupils on roll. 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 are of white British heritage. An interim headteacher has been in place since September 2015. The school was judged to be good by Ofsted in 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- Christian values have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
- The inclusivity of the school encourages, nurtures and challenges all pupils through its Christian values
- The committed Christian leadership and drive of the interim headteacher and governors has strengthened the Christian distinctiveness of the school.

Areas to improve

- Extend the current process of self evaluation of the school, as a church school, to secure further evidence of the school's Christian distinctiveness and improve practice
- Develop the outside environment, so that it reflects the rich explicit Christian symbolism evident inside the school
- Ensure that all members of the school community grow in awareness of where Christian values are rooted.

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

The interim headteacher has secured rapid progress in the development of the school as a church school and the impact is reflected in all aspects of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Quality displays link the school's seven agreed Christian values of reverence, compassion, koinonia, forgiveness, trust, perseverance and thankfulness to relevant biblical quotes from Philippians, Peter, Luke, Corinthians and Mark. The outside environment does not provide any explicit areas to reinforce the strong Christian symbolism that pupils experience inside. Christian values are understood and clearly articulated by most members of the school community and are evident in the positive and caring relationships across the school community and the excellent behaviour seen around the school. The Christian values underpin all areas of school life where learners say that 'Christian values are very important to this school'. This ethos contributes to pupil achievement, where data indicates that the trend is above national average although last year KS2 attainment, in achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, was lower than national. The RE leader is knowledgeable and experienced in supporting staff to deliver good RE across the school. RE is effectively supporting the Christian character of the school and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural growth. In RE lessons observed pupils' secure knowledge of koinonia was linked to belonging to groups in the community and a lesson on the ten commandments illustrated pupils' knowledge about Christian values and Bible stories. To raise understanding of diversity the school and church welcomed a choir and dance group from Uganda which increased the respect and understanding that pupils have for other cultures. Pupils are secure in their beliefs that they should be respectful to people from other religions and consider that this knowledge and respect is important and should be passed onto their own children in the future. This ensures that pupils develop their respect for diversity in the world and an understanding of Christianity as a world-wide faith. The school raises money for Red Nose day, Children in Need and The British Legion. Pupils clearly connect these fund raising initiatives to the school's Christian value of compassion.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is a special and distinct time in the school day when Christian values are effectively reinforced. Pupils say that they value this time where they learn about people who illustrate their school's Christian values. Discussion in collective worship linked the Christian value of compassion to the actions of Jesus in the story of Zaccheus and created a powerful collective understanding across the school. Pupils are actively engaged and respectful. They participate in worship through singing, reading the gathering and dismissal, reading prayers, and praying. Aspects of Anglican worship, such as reciting the Lord's Prayer, are well established and pupils can clearly relate Bible stories to their own lives. One pupil recounted that the story of Noah taught him 'that God will always be forgiving and to not disrespect him'. The person of Jesus Christ is evident in collective worship and pupils have opportunities to develop their understanding of the Trinity. Pupils talk about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with a growing appreciation. Pupils are beginning to plan, lead and evaluate worship and are growing in their evaluative skills. The services at St Margaret's parish church celebrating Harvest, Lent, Easter, Christmas and end of the school year appropriately extend the opportunity for worship and are well attended by parents. The vicar and curate regularly lead worship at the school and are known well by the school community. Pupils state that the vicar and curate are important because Ditchling is a Church of England School and the clergy can teach them how to behave in Church. Parents praise the clergy for creating 'magic memories'. Prayer has a high profile in the school. Interactive reflection areas in each classroom increase the growth of spirituality by providing a quiet place to pray, read the Bible and to write prayers. Pupils write their own thoughtful prayers for inclusion in collective worship and for the prayer box in the hall. Recently the school prayer has been rewritten by pupils. Collective worship is not yet outstanding as planning and evaluation of worship does not consistently involve a range of stakeholders.

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

The interim headteacher, staff team and governing body clearly articulate a strong understanding of how their Christian vision gives direction for the whole school community. They have been proactive in addressing the key issues from the previous inspection. For example Christian values are now more accessible to pupils through visual displays in classes, corridors and the entrance to the school. This gives a consistent reminder to pupils of these values and the reflection areas in each class give them increased ownership. The current school development plan includes explicit action points linked to Christian distinctiveness. For example, this year development of collective worship, prayer and visual materials for use in RE are included thereby giving them a high profile. Governors are committed to the Christian ethos of the school and support the school well. They make visits to worship and school events throughout the year enabling them to know their school. The pupil welfare, church and community governors' committee has started to formalize effectively evaluation of the school's Christian distinctiveness. During staff interviews candidates are questioned about their commitment to the school's Christian distinctiveness to ensure that the school appoints staff committed to promoting the Christian ethos. Links with the local church community are effective and mutually enriching. The Church School House Trust helped to fund the school library. Staff are well supported in their professional development through recent training by the interim headteacher on reflection areas, Christian values, RE and collective worship planning. This has effectively increased the skills and knowledge they have to develop the school as a church school. The high standards of pastoral care and the development of a calm and focussed learning environment based on Christian values make an important contribution to pupils' progress. This helps all children to achieve their best. Pupils are involved in decision making through pupil questionnaires and the school council. Parents speak warmly of the school and the caring environment which 'fosters a real community of pupils helping each other' through the school buddy system. Parents value the community links of the school such as with the Ditchling museum, sports clubs and the local horticultural society. In a recent questionnaire most parents were positive about questions relating to Christian distinctiveness. However, parents are less secure in their knowledge of what makes a church school different to a community school. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

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