

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

The FitzHerbert Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Ashes Lane, Fenny Bentley, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 1LD	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Derby
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Derbyshire
Date of inspection	18 May 2017
Date of last inspection	June 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VA Primary 112883
Headteacher	Linda Hack
Inspector's name and number	Kerry Palmer (60)

School context

The FitzHerbert is a much smaller than average primary school serving the village of Fenny Bentley and surrounding area. There is little social deprivation. Almost all the children are of White British heritage. The proportion with special needs or classified as disadvantaged, typically below average, fluctuates with pupil turnover. Levels of pupil mobility are higher than average which, along with small cohorts, impacts on the pattern of outcomes. The headteacher has been in post since September 2013. The school works in partnership with the Dove Valley Teaching Alliance. St Edmunds Parish Church is a short walk away. It is part of the Peak Five group which has been without a full time incumbent for some time.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The FitzHerbert Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Strong, effective and energetic Christian leadership which ensures that the school's Christian ethos is at the centre of all developments.
- A dedicated staff team driven by Christian values of service and compassion who recognise each child as unique and special with God given gifts and talents to be valued and nurtured.
- Well informed and actively involved governors who value the school's historic church foundation and give high priority to promoting its Christian character.
- The whole community of school, families, parish and village working as one with common cause to give their children a Christian foundation for life.

Areas to improve

- Review key documentation and welfare policies to ensure that the strong Christian values, implicit in all aspects of school life, are explicitly identified and expressed as based on the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

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

It is clearly evident that the Christian values which are at the heart of this school promote an excellent education for every child. They are exceptionally positive about learning, displaying enthusiasm, confidence and maturity. Small cohorts and high pupil mobility, resulting from frequent house moves, impact on apparent levels of achievement. However, data makes clear that individual pupil progress often exceeds expectations with levels of mastery recognised as exceptional. Children receive a broad, rich education. They are justly proud of the excellence displayed in sport, drama and music. Every child is valued as of equal worth. Challenge and

determination are positive drivers. Consequently, the small number recognised as disadvantaged make as good or better progress than others. The needs of children of all abilities are well served. Attendance data shows that children clearly like coming to school. Behaviour is exemplary; children display mutual respect and concern for others. Children's safety and wellbeing are a priority. Much thought is given to social and spiritual development which ensures that they are at ease with life. Compassion and service comes naturally. Empathy for the less fortunate is seen in a desire to help causes ranging from the Ashbourne food bank to Christian Aid. Many school activities are planned across age groups so that older children naturally befriend and support those younger or arriving from another school. A range of school councils give many children opportunities to take responsibility and develop self-confidence. Examples include councillors caring for rabbits and chickens, including selling the eggs, for games and sports, for befriending and for worship. The fact that this is a church school is evident in the abundance of displays, artefacts and Bible references around the school and on its website. More importantly, it is obvious in relationships in a school which lives out Jesus teaching, displayed around school, to, "love one another", John 13.34". The Christian character of the school is very evident in its approach to religious education (RE). However, the fact that the school's values are Christian because they are founded on the life of Christ is not made explicit. The school actively addresses issues relating to growing up in a small, rural, mono-cultural community. The curriculum widens children's horizons with teaching about other cultures and faiths. This is illustrated by the established Full International Schools Award. There are visits, such as to a Gurdwara, residential and participation in large scale events such as 'Young Voices' at Sheffield Arena. The school also celebrates Black History Month. Many joint activities take place with other schools. FitzHerbert is one of only 12 in the county to gain the Sainsbury's School Gold Sports Award. Children thrive on the many enrichment opportunities enjoyed.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

This school succeeds in its aspiration to have collective worship of high status and value which is central to school life. There have been many positive developments since the last inspection which have increased opportunities for child participation, leadership and a feeling of ownership. Groups of children lead worship weekly and the worship council organise many practicalities. This with the introduction of 'Seeing Anew' approaches and reflective strategies impacts very positively on spiritual development. The 'Images of God' resource is used to good effect and the school's national park setting promotes awe and wonder at God's creation. The regular worship format also helps children appreciate a liturgical setting. Prayer is an important feature of worship and daily school life. Books of children's prayers are regularly refreshed and used. Writing shows growth in children's appreciation of the nature of prayer, with phrases such as, 'Dear Lord, guide us to the light...' and, 'Help us through the bad times...'. The current programme of collective worship contains many elements of good practice. Professional development and sharing of good practice has built staff strengths in planning and leading worship. Children's views are garnered and acted upon. Worship is obviously Christian with scripture at its heart. The unique importance of Jesus is recognised and children take his teaching into their lives. 'My daughter taught her little sister to say prayers at meal times... and we don't go to church', a parent confided. The planned themes allow flexibility for topical issues. A recent focus on the plight of Egyptian Christians raised awareness of Christianity as a world-wide faith. Weekly worship at St Edmunds Parish Church, including festival services, gives children an appreciation of Anglican tradition and are looked forward to by the children, families and the whole village community. 'They make it fun...we all love to join in', a parent said. The school actively supports the Fenny Bentley Initiative, a local action group established to promote community cohesion in the village. Worship is also enriched by occasional visiting leaders and visits to other parishes for Easter and Advent events.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is highly valued throughout the school and enhances its Christian ethos. It is taught to a high standard, comparable with other core subjects. Teachers use a variety of strategies which successfully engage children with varied learning styles. They encourage children and have high expectations. Children are used to working independently and in small groups, eager to learn more and make good progress. This is monitored and supported by staff and governors using book trawls, observations and an evolving assessment system. The subject is effectively managed with all staff encouraged to contribute to development planning. The introduction of 'Understanding Christianity' and enquiry approaches are already resulting in theological development and thoughtful reflection on 'Big Questions'. Considering 'My heaven', a Year 2 child said, 'I've put hearts because Jesus loves us all'. 'God is the whole heartbeat', wrote another. Careful planning and appropriate challenge ensure progression throughout the school. The Ascension, for example, is studied by all. Younger children think about happy and sad goodbyes then produce collages, Year 3 and Year 4 children use an IT tablet to plot emotions from a simple Bible text whilst older children consider three versions of 'The Great Commission' and its implications for Christians today. Children talk about RE enthusiastically. 'Everyone wanted books about RE', said a library helper, following a class visit to a Sikh

Gurdwara. Children are effectively engaged and detailed marking motivates further learning. As expected in a church school, Bible teaching is at the core of the RE syllabus; children's knowledge of Christianity is excellent. An appreciation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is embedded in school practice. RE makes a significant contribution to children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. Appropriate teaching about other faiths helps children appreciate similarities and differences and respect for other cultures.

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

The Christian commitment, energy and professional skills of the headteacher have sustained the positive growth of this outstanding church school. The leadership team has nurtured staff who work together effectively with confidence that the school's Christian values are a common bond. Professional development is recognised as vital. There is effective engagement with relevant local authority, diocesan and teaching alliance support. For example, a recent staff training session underpinned a Christian approach to effective teaching through 'What if?' strategies. Staff are encouraged to take initiatives and additional responsibilities. A senior teacher is cascading diocesan 'Understanding Christianity' training and leading its integration into the school's RE syllabus. Staff and governors are united in the pursuit of excellence promoting a culture of continuous improvement. This truly is a small school with big ambitions. The highly effective governing body have a well-developed pattern of monitoring which feeds into development priorities. The RE curriculum is a current focus. Governors also contribute a monthly item for the parish magazine. Parents are exceptionally supportive of the school. Several who had moved their children from other schools were particularly complimentary, 'She was shy, but loved it straight away... they took the trouble to get to know the whole family', one commented. They speak of the dedication and commitment of staff and value greatly the strong, Christian foundation for life each child receives. Families are actively involved in the life of the school and village community. The 'Friends' organise social events like the BBQ following school sports and bingo supper nights. Fundraising provides regular toast, fruit and a fresh water fountain for the children. Historic links with the FitzHerbert family are maintained through participation in the Tissington Well Dressings each Ascensiontide. The school fully meets statutory requirements for RE and worship. The potential for further positive development is excellent.

SIAMS report May 2017 The FitzHerbert CE (VA) Primary School, Fenny Bentley, DE6 1LD