



**St Michael's CE Primary School,
Playden**

Diocese of Chichester

Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools

Inspection Report



Date of inspection:	13 January 2012
Name of inspector:	Andrew McGregor
NS inspector's number:	729
School address:	Houghton Green Lane Playden Rye East Sussex TN31 7PJ
Unique reference number:	114520
Status:	Voluntary Controlled
Number on roll:	94
Age range of pupils:	5-11
LA:	East Sussex
Name of chair of governors:	Darryl Wall
Name of headteacher:	John Greenway
Date of previous inspection:	October 2008

The inspection of denominational education and collective worship in the school was carried out in accordance with Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Description of the school

St Michael's Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average school situated in a rural location about one mile to the north of Rye. About half its pupils are drawn from its traditional catchment area and the remainder from Rye and surrounding villages. The team vicar has been in post for less than a year.

Summary judgement

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's CE Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

Christian values are embedded in school life, and have a very strong positive influence on the high quality of staff and pupil relationships and well-being. The school's links with the church are recognised by pupils and parents as a distinctive feature of the school.

Grade: 2

Established strengths

- The leadership of the headteacher and staff in developing the church school distinctiveness.
- The strong Christian ethos which underpins all areas of school life.
- The supportive involvement of the team vicar and strong links with the local church.

Focus for development

- Develop the role of the foundation governors to monitor and evaluate the school's distinctiveness and the impact of Collective Worship on pupils.
- Create new opportunities for pupils to play a more active role in Collective Worship.
- Develop the way the outdoor environment makes a contribution to the pupils' spiritual development, by providing a quiet area for reflection.

The school meets the statutory requirement for Collective Worship	Yes
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The school, through its distinctive Christian character is good at meeting the needs of all its learners.

The Christian ethos at the school promotes good behaviour from the pupils and positive relationships throughout the whole school community. Pupils speak about how God's forgiveness 'goes on and on' and give examples where they have forgiven each other in response. Christian values underpin the life of the school and have a positive impact on pupils, who support each other because 'Together Everyone Achieves More.' The school's 'Wall of Fame' display makes a clear link between the celebration of pupils' achievements and Christian values. The main entrance area, the corridors and the classrooms, reflect the spiritual qualities the school wishes to promote. It is clear that pupils learn a great deal about faith from these areas within the school and can articulate the Christian values these displays promote. Pupils are given opportunities to respond by adding their own prayers to the 'Spiritual Thoughts Tree' and their contributions show how much this is valued. However, the school has recognised the need to develop an outdoor space for quiet reflection. Collective Worship and religious education lessons enable pupils to learn about faith and to reflect on its relevance to their everyday lives. Parents are proud of the school and feel its Christian character is an important factor in promoting a family atmosphere where older pupils help and support younger ones, through activities such as paired reading. They can see the school's love and compassion reaching out to the local community through charitable giving and care for particular families in times of difficulty. They value the way the headteacher takes a lead by welcoming everyone on the gate each morning and knowing all the children by name. Pupils enjoy their regular visits to church to explore Anglican traditions and celebrate key Christian festivals together with their parents. The Nativity Service is so popular it is held twice in church each year, in order to allow all parents and grandparents to attend. The new incumbent is very active and supportive in the school community. She is working closely with the headteacher, staff and governors to promote the Christian dimension of the school.

Grade: 2

The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is good.

The school sees the daily act of worship as an important means of fostering the Christian education of all its pupils and providing opportunities for spiritual development. The strong sense of family felt in the school stems from the importance attached to these worship times. Pupils clearly enjoy Collective Worship and talk with enthusiasm about their favourite songs and prayers. They are given many opportunities to be involved in special church occasions such as Harvest and Christmas, through dramatic presentations, the writing and saying of prayers and taking a lead in the running of services. However, although they participate enthusiastically with the singing and prayers, and respond well to questions asked, there is still plenty of scope to involve them more in the leading of daily acts of Collective Worship back in school, despite the limitations of space. The headteacher plans Collective Worship with support from the senior team and the team vicar. The broad range of themes reflects the school's distinctiveness and is effective in giving pupils opportunities to consider how stories from the Bible are relevant to their own lives. Staff attendance at whole school worship helps pupils to understand its importance in the life of the school. There is calm music at the beginning which helps pupils prepare for a time of thought and reflection. There is no school hall and the classroom space used for worship is limited, but every effort is made to overcome these limitations such as the Christian symbols used on the worship table providing an effective focus. The use of visual aids, in addition to thought provoking questions, means that the behaviour is very good. Children respond well to Collective Worship, which is Anglican in character. The prayers used in the acts of daily worship were written by the pupils themselves. They have a good knowledge of the use of symbols such as the candle and the cross and this is enhanced by the use of artefacts such as a model of the 'good shepherd.' The school

council has been taking a leading role in the evaluation of Collective Worship, by devising a questionnaire to gather responses from across the whole school. They have also started to plan for the school Easter Service to be held in church.

Grade: 2

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

The headteacher's effective leadership makes a powerful contribution to the Christian vision of the school. Pupils and parents speak highly about the way he demonstrates Christian care and concern for others and promotes an ethos of praise, support and encouragement. All stakeholders were represented when reviewing the mission statement in order to ensure it is distinctive and provides a unity of purpose and direction for the school. This involvement has strengthened their commitment to the school as a Christian community. The school's aim, 'To create a happy Christian environment where each child may grow in an awareness of him/herself, of others and of God' is made explicit on displays all around the building. Staff make good use of training opportunities provided by the Diocese, for example in Godly Play and the impact can be seen in the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Relationships between the staff are strong and supportive and individuals appreciate the care and concern received when going through times of difficulty. The school has very effective links with the local and wider community through activities such as taking Harvest gifts to the village respite home and developing links with a school in the Gambia. The team vicar is beginning to make a real difference through her active involvement in the school and her support of the headteacher and staff. The headteacher and representatives from the staff and governors were involved in discussing and drawing together the school's self-evaluation toolkit. However, the role of foundation governors in the underpinning self-evaluation process needs to be developed. Pupils have a voice in the leadership of the school through the school council and their ideas and suggestions are listened to and often adopted. The school has made good progress with issues raised in the previous inspection.

Grade: 2