

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Farway Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Green,
Farway,
Colyton,
EX24 6EQ.

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 29th February 2012

Date of last inspection: 6th March 2009

School's unique reference number: 113432

Headteacher: Mrs Angela Potter

Inspector's name and number: Jackie Rudman 601

School context

Farway Church of England Primary School is a much smaller than average size rural school near the Devon town of Honiton. There are three mixed-age classes. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average. The on-site pre-school provision is managed by a private body. The school has many awards including Health Schools Plus status, Eco Schools, Travelwise, Active Lifestyle awards and International School award.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Farway Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are good

Farway Church of England Primary School is a good church school because it has developed a clear and visible character based on Christian values which permeates every aspect of school life. Good relationships underpin working practice and make the school a happy place for both children and adults. Strong church links affirm the school's distinctive Christian ethos, enrich collective worship, and sustain the role of the school within the community. Because Religious Education is well taught children make good progress and develop into compassionate and tolerant young people with a sound foundation for their lives.

Established strengths

- Clear Christian values recognised by all the school community
- Good relationships leading to effective leadership from headteacher and governors
- Strong church links which enrich children's understanding of worship
- High quality teaching of Religious Education (RE) led by experienced and knowledgeable coordinator
- Enthusiastic and confident children who value their school

Focus for development

- Enrich children's experience of Anglican worship by the introduction of age-appropriate liturgy
- Develop the school site so that the internal environment is as well ordered and appropriate as the outside environment

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

At the heart of Farway Church of England Primary School is a confident Christian ethos which overflows into all aspects of school life. Core Christian values of love, respect, care, friendship, honesty and trust are the bedrock of its character. These are understood by all members of the school and displayed prominently in classrooms and public areas of the school. Children and adults spontaneously refer to these values when talking about their school. Although the school is very small and geographically isolated, children are given an impressive range of opportunities and experiences which enrich their lives and which make a strong impact on their spiritual understanding. They speak with equal exuberance and excitement of collecting eggs from the school chickens and growing their own vegetables, of visiting a mosque and experiencing the Ash Wednesday service. As one child said, 'we have everything in this school.' Within this range of high quality opportunities children develop the confidence to articulate their understanding of Christian beliefs as well as a respect for those whose opinions may differ from their own. Parents are equally enthusiastic about the school. They particularly like the way the school encourages children to express their own views and opinions. They say the distinctive Christian character of the school develops a strong sense of self esteem because all children are recognised as individuals and that every opinion is equally valued. They say staff support each other to care for their children and that they feel welcomed into school at any time to discuss issues. Because adult relationships within the school are strong they form a good role model for the children. Therefore children develop into compassionate and tolerant young people who are able to relate to one another in a mature way. They are well prepared to make good lifestyle choices based on Christian principles.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is intrinsic to the daily life of the school and central to its Christian ethos. It is well planned following the churches year with a diverse variety of themes. Visitors and visits to other places of worship including a mosque and synagogue make a good contribution to the children's experience and spiritual understanding. Worship usually takes place in the school hall which is prepared with a specially dressed table, candles and a cross. Children come into worship reverently and even the youngest use the quiet music for reflection. As one child said, 'you go all still inside.' Because numbers on the school roll are small, worship is an intimate interchange of ideas in which children take part in debate and discussion as well as listening to adults. All opinions are valued and therefore children gain spiritual confidence in sharing aspects of their spiritual journey with their peers and adults. School is aware that developing an active liturgy in which all children take part simultaneously would further support children who find listening more of a challenge. All staff attend worship and this sets a good role model for the children. Every classroom has its own quiet table where children may come to reflect. The sensitive ways in which the display on these tables is arranged enables children to understand that being a Christian involves compassion for the needy. Therefore they learn that prayer is supported by action. The school has an impressive track record of raising money and support for charitable causes, both locally, nationally and internationally. In particular children are passionate about supporting a local child with Batten disease and have organised events to raise money for research into finding a cure for the disease. There are strong church links with local clergy regularly leading collective worship and services for festivals and special times in the churches calendar taking place in the local church building. Older children are offered confirmation classes. Consequently local clergy are involved in the life of the school and children, parents, staff and governors benefit from their spiritual leadership and support. Children enjoy planning and taking part in church services and parents say it reinforces the place of the school within the local community. They say they find services in which the children take part to be meaningful and uplifting and nurture their own spiritual insight. In particular services such as Ash Wednesday make a memorable impact on children's understanding of the central Christian message and the traditions of the Anglican church.

The effectiveness of the religious education is excellent

Comprehensive and thorough planning, teaching, monitoring and evaluating mean that religious education (RE) makes an outstanding impact on children's spiritual understanding. It is well planned using the Diocesan scheme of work with the coordinator teaching the subject throughout the school. This ensures a consistency of delivery within a comprehensive and well designed programme. The outstanding expertise of the coordinator ensures that lessons are of a high quality in which children are fully engaged. Children benefit from her clear explanations and relaxed teaching style. They develop a secure subject knowledge and gain confidence in their own spiritual understanding. The elements of fun and excitement which permeate lessons inspire all children in their learning, whilst differentiated learning activities ensure that all abilities benefit from her excellent teaching. The standards in RE are regularly monitored and evaluated and reported to governors along with other core subjects. Standards in RE are equal to and in some cases higher than core subjects. Attainments are broadly in line with age-expectations although some children are working at a higher level. Because the subject is given a high priority within the curriculum it makes a strong contribution to children's moral values. For instance when two children were sharing a tree-climbing experience with the rest of the class they admitted that they had both been very scared, but had not wished to show fear in front of the other. The teacher skilfully led them to think about wider implications of disguising true feelings through facial expressions. Through lessons such as these children are nurtured to develop high levels of personal confidence, compassion and tolerance and to investigate their own feelings within a secure and happy school atmosphere.

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

The headteacher and governors lead the school well. The headteacher shows a personal and professional commitment to the school which is recognised and appreciated by both governors and parents. She has a clear vision of the Christian character of the school and the sensitivity to express this vision within a framework of tolerance and respect. Christian values permeate all aspects of the school. Full governor meetings begin with prayer allowing members time for reflection and there are good systems in place for reviewing the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Items on the full governor agenda always include reports on the Christian character of the school. Therefore the school benefits from governors who are fully informed and knowledgeable and make management decisions based on Christian principles. Consequently parents have confidence in management decision being in the best interest of their children. Foundation governors know the school well and give excellent support to the headteacher. They are proactive in their involvement with the daily life of the school and provide good links with the local church, especially during this time of vacancy. The chair of governors takes an active role particularly in terms of the building. His vision has been seen through the huge changes in the school environment which is now a credit to him and the governing body. Further planned internal remodelling will enhance the building even further making the interior of the school as attractive as the exterior environment. Imaginative and innovative use is made of the outside space with attractive use of children's prayers to decorate and enhance specific areas. In particular children enjoy reading prayers hung above the outside quiet area. They say they use the prayers in their own life to say thank you to God for their lovely school.