

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Farway Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Green
Farway
Colyton
Devon
EX24 6EQ

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Exeter
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Devon
Name of federation	The Jubilee Federation
Date of inspection	30 March 2017
Date of last inspection	29 February 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	113432
Executive Headteacher	Katie Gray
Inspector's name and number	Patricia Morris 626

School context

Farway is a much smaller than average sized primary school with 14 children on roll, working together in one class. The school federated with two other small church schools in September 2014 and became part of The Jubilee Federation. The majority of children are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the number supported by Pupil Premium. Mobility is high with a third of children joining the school after the reception class. Attendance is below the national average.

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

- The strong commitment of the executive headteacher, and support from within the federation, ensures the school is continually improving as a church school.
- Distinctive Christian values are clearly expressed and embedded in the life of the school, successfully impacting on relationships and children's excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Collective worship contributes to Christian values and children's perspective of prayer.
- A highly developed interpretation of spirituality, and opportunities to engage in high quality outdoor experiences, empowers children to develop a personal spirituality.

Areas to improve

- Arrange further opportunities to engage with other faiths to enable children to gain first hand experiences of the diversity of other beliefs and religions.
- Develop the quality mark assessment tool to ensure more rigour in formal monitoring of religious education (RE) provision across the federation that identifies further improvements in key areas and CPD.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of the Trinity in order to appreciate its importance in the Christian faith.

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

Christian values are clearly expressed and deeply embedded in the life of the school. Values are based on Christian teachings and are an intrinsic part of school life. For example, the way children interact with each other and naturally refer to comparisons with stories in the Bible. Children confidently articulate the central value of love and recognise its importance in underpinning all other values. This is seen in exemplary behaviour around school and in lessons where there is respect for each other's opinions whatever their age. A 'Good Samaritan' award, promoting a school motto 'looking after ourselves and looking after others', makes an excellent contribution in recognising good behaviours. Children make clear links between Bible stories and how they reflect the reasons for receiving the 'Good Samaritan' award. For example, they say that it promotes teamwork. This is reflected in the strength of relationships with everyone working together as a family within a Christian ethos. Children are proud of their school logo of an apple tree with each child's handprint representing a leaf and core values as the roots. They are animated by the school's history, eagerly recalling how an apple tree was planted in memory of the founder of the original school. Intent on building on the school's tradition, they have named house teams after different varieties of apples. This generated the Farway Orchard Aims, developed by children, to support Christian values. Values successfully contribute to children's spiritual development with children saying 'values help me to be the best I can be'. There is a clear definition of spirituality promoted through posters and photographs on display around the school as a way of sharing individual experiences with each other. Children express their thoughts clearly and with confidence. One child stated 'spirituality is a moment when you look at something and think 'wow!' Opportunities for children's spiritual development outdoors are excellent. Children speak enthusiastically about the 'Forest School' that offers experiences such as woodcarving, listening for silence, growing vegetables and tending chickens. They describe it as 'a place where we can't stop learning', inspiring them, for example, to create 'learning animals' from natural items found outside. Children respond with enthusiasm and develop a vocabulary to articulate how they learn through statements such as 'we empathise and listen like rabbits' or 'we are interdependent like penguins'. Through these experiences, Forest School encourages children to be self-motivated and to reflect on their learning processes. These 'Learning Powers' develop skills for life and help children to make better sense of their growing spirituality by finding connections between their learning. Children acknowledge the beauty of their surroundings saying, 'we are lucky to be in such a beautiful part of God's creation'. There is an appreciation of Christianity as a world faith and children are beginning to develop greater understanding through hearing about teacher's experiences of living in Africa and Nepal. This inspired fund-raising to support a child in Africa and a Christian mission, giving children an empathy with others who are not as fortunate as them.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is strongly underpinned by Christian values. Children clearly articulate the importance of worship and say 'it is a time to reflect' and 'God is always there, no matter what'. Teaching from the Bible gives children a firm foundation in how the messages they hear from biblical stories can be applied to their own lives. Planning is based on the 'Values for Life' scheme and effectively supported by the 'Roots and Fruits' resource. Children take responsibility for certain aspects of worship such as role-play and saying prayers. Prayer has a high profile and is said throughout the school day. Children know the Lord's Prayer and reply to blessings with appropriate responses. They have opportunities to write their own prayers and are confident in standing up and saying spontaneous prayers. One child complimented another on an 'amazing' prayer he had said at lunchtime. A prayer corner provides good opportunities for children to respond when needed to incidents in their life with a prayer. Children develop their understanding of prayers from the Early Years with prayer pebbles being used to say thank you or to ask for help. The partnership with the local church is strong and children particularly enjoy visits from the 'Open the Book' team. The vicar is a regular visitor in school and children visit the local church weekly for worship and to celebrate major Christian festivals that are well attended by parents. Children see the church as a special place and the vicar praises the respect they show when they are inside God's house. Aspects of Anglican practice have been introduced in the form of a traditional 'ashing' ceremony on Ash Wednesday and a Eucharist is being introduced in one of the federated schools with the intention of developing this across all three schools. Children have a simple understanding of the Trinity as reflected in such comments as 'It is three parts but God is in all of them'. Worship makes good contributions to children's spiritual development with many opportunities for reflection. This is especially so when worship is outdoors and incorporates the celebration of God's creation. Monitoring and evaluation take place in the form of child conferencing that feeds into the action plan and successfully identifies ways to move worship forward.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) has a high profile with the majority of children making good progress. Children are engaged in lessons that are skilfully differentiated for the wide age range within the class. An enquiry based approach

challenges children to explore ideas at their own level. Staff have good subject knowledge and extend children's answers through skilful questioning. Children answer questions articulately using an impressive vocabulary that supports them rise to challenges. Questions such as 'How does the way we feel affect the way we think and act?' encourage older children to think more deeply about the effect of their emotions. Such opportunities help children develop an increasing awareness of their inner self and their place in the world today and this reflects the valuable contribution that religious education makes to children's spiritual development. There has been a high turnover of staff during the last few years and a new teacher will be taking the class from next term. However, the RE co-ordinator is pro-active in her support for new staff and committed to developing RE across the three schools in the federation. Standards in RE are in line with other core subjects and this is affirmed through a variety of monitoring strategies. The school is currently implanting new approaches to assessment in RE following a recent course. This is still at an early stage of implementation and has yet to fully develop greater rigour. The co-ordinator is effectively communicating these expectations to governors and staff and ensures they are well informed on current developments in RE. For example, the introduction of the 'Understanding Christianity' materials is enabling children to deepen their knowledge of aspects of Christianity. There is some awareness of other faiths and cultures with children showing respect for diversity and differences in other religions. The experience of visits to a mosque and cathedral engaged and excited children. The co-ordinator acknowledges that such opportunities are valuable experiences in supporting children's understanding of other faiths and is planning to develop a programme of a wider variety of visits and visitors in order to support children in knowing how faith impacts on people's lives.

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

The executive headteacher works hard to develop the Christian character of the school. She articulates and promotes a vision based on distinctive Christian values and clearly describes the impact of values on children's lives and the life of the school. Leaders know the children and families very well and are highly committed in promoting a nurturing Christian environment. Governors have a good understanding of the school based on various self-evaluation strategies. They ensure the Christian distinctiveness is always an item on the agenda at full governing body meetings. Regular open days, for governors to 'drop in' and observe the Christian ethos in action, gives them valuable opportunities to talk to children and staff on an informal basis. Challenging questions and frequent references to the school development plan, which is effectively linked to performance management, heightens governors' knowledge of the school. Governors are well informed and very supportive whilst still challenging leadership of the school and feel the school is moving forward as a church school. They are positive about the opportunity for federation and see it as a way to preserve the future of the school and to make it stronger. They believe the three schools are mutually supportive and work together very well to enable children to have increased opportunities for creative experiences. Attendance is below the national average but is improving. The school work closely to monitor this and work effectively with the education welfare officer who is very supportive. The partnership with the vicar and local church is strong. Children contribute articles to the parish magazine to share their learning with the community. It is also used as a way of informing parishioners of what is happening in the school and to invite them to any events. This has proved an effective communication and led to a creative knitting project being initiated where villagers make puppets to support children in telling stories from the Bible in RE lessons. Parents are well informed through newsletters and informal opportunities to give their opinions. They are very supportive and say that through recent challenges, the school remains welcoming and they are reassured by the good relationships with staff. They are adamant that Christian values and the calm, happy atmosphere contribute to their children being happy and say how much they love coming to school. They think the school is a wonderful extended family and are thankful that it is still part of village life and has a gradual increasing roll. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship.

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