



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Staplecross Methodist Primary School

Bodiam Road
Robertsbridge
TN32 5QD

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Methodist District: South East - Hastings, Bexhill & Rye Circuit.

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 8 October 2015

Date of last inspection: 9 December 2010

School's unique reference number: 114531

Headteacher: Liz Avard

Inspector's name and number: John Horwood 177

School context

This is a popular smaller-than-average primary school with 87 pupils on roll. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school is the only Methodist primary school in East Sussex and the only church in the village is St. Mark's (Church of England). The school has an excellent reputation for supporting every child and a significant number of parents from outside the local area choose to send their children to the school. The Circuit Superintendent Minister has recently been appointed as a foundation governor on the school governing body.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Staplecross Methodist Primary School as a church school are outstanding

- The experienced and dedicated headteacher leads by example. Her strong faith and her determination that everyone in the school is special and has an equal opportunity to succeed are ensuring that the school continues to be an outstanding church school.
- Christianity and Christian values are the basis of school life. This ensures that outstanding relationships enable pupils and adults to develop mutual care, respect and understanding. This, in turn, enables teaching and learning to be very effective.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding so that pupils develop into mature, sensible and caring individuals whose behaviour is outstanding.
- School and church leaders are working together to ensure that everyone associated with the school works as an excellent united team within a caring and loving environment to promote Christian values and support pupils' education and development.

Areas to improve

- Embed the current curriculum content reflecting the life and work of John Wesley and extend the provision to younger children.
- Develop pupils' understanding of Methodist traditions and practice through enhanced activities within the curriculum and by relevant visits and visiting speakers.

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

Staplecross Methodist Primary School successfully meets the needs of the community and every learner. As a result, parents are quick to identify that the headteacher and her team always have time to talk to them and that they feel part of the school. The school has developed an excellent approach to explaining Christian values openly to parents and pupils and explaining how they link to everyday values and what are considered to be 'British values'. Everyone is made very aware of the school values and that as pupils go through school there will be a focus of each one in turn. The outcome of the openness is evident in that all adults and pupils are happy and have excellent relationships with one another. All the leaders and staff are excellent role models for the pupils who respond well and develop excellent personal skills for their future life. The outstanding Christian character is demonstrated in many ways. Pupils and staff are proud of the school and confidently and explicitly identify the importance of Christian values and the significant impact they have on the academic achievement of every pupil. Parents and pupils readily identify the strengths of the school and how being a church school is of benefit to the pupils. Pupils explain how the school is identified as a Methodist church school by notices outside the school, the school uniform they wear and by symbols around the school. There is a strong focus on ensuring equal opportunities which demonstrates the Methodist tradition of being part of a community. Leaders ensure that teaching is consistently at least good and that pupils are given extra help if they need it. Pupils play their part as community members by behaving exceptionally well so that everyone can learn in lessons. All the day-to-day activities are very effective in determining the Christian character of the school. The strong faith and commitment of school leaders enables pupils to develop spirituality throughout the school. Adults and pupils have opportunities to reflect during the day and everyone in the school demonstrates a natural willingness to help each other. Adults and pupils confidently talk about religion and their spiritual understanding. This is seen in religious education lessons where pupils are given many opportunities to research projects and discuss and reflect on topics. Their pride in their work and their respect for the subject is seen in the good quality presentation of their work. There is limited cultural diversity within the school but this is addressed through the curriculum content and through, for example, visits to other places of worship. Visitors from the Methodist community are increasing following the appointment of the current Circuit Superintendent Minister as a foundation governor. The topics taught in the school make a good contribution to developing pupils' knowledge of other faiths and of Christianity as a world-wide faith. Religious education lessons make an outstanding contribution to all elements of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The current excellent support from the church community, both from St. Mark's and from the Methodist circuit, has a significant impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Prayer and periods of reflection are given a high priority throughout the school. As a result, pupils know the purpose of prayer and say that they sometimes use prayers as a means of spiritual support. Collective worship is well-planned and teachers lead it on a rota basis. The headteacher and the Methodist minister are also involved in leading worship. One assembly each week is a celebration assembly and once a week there is a music assembly which reflects the importance of singing to the Methodist community. Regular services take place in St Mark's church and these are regularly attended by parents. As a result of the variety of worships, pupils accept diversity within the church as natural although only on a limited basis. Some parents suggested that they could be invited to attend a service led by the Methodist minister and this is being addressed by the headteacher and the minister. The school uses a multi-sensory approach to worship and involves pupils throughout the worship. This may include them using their own prayers. Pupils can remember worship from past years which have a special meaning for them demonstrating effective impact of the worship. Worship is based around Christianity and regularly uses Biblical material. There is a strong focus on Jesus and religious festivals/Christian festivals alongside moral issues. The worship theme links to the

current Christian value being 'studied' as well as the religious education projects. Opportunities for pupils to have experiences based on Methodist traditions and practice have been limited because of the school's physical isolation from a Methodist community. However, there is currently a strong and growing partnership with the Methodist Circuit with a determination to develop this aspect. This has already enabled a module on the life and work of John Wesley to be introduced into the Year5/6 curriculum, although this is not yet fully embedded into the curriculum or taught to younger pupils. As a result of collective worship pupils gain a good understanding of God as Father and Son. They have an age-appropriate awareness of the Holy Spirit. Visitors to the collective worship help pupils gain an understanding of other faiths and of diversity within Christianity as a world-wide faith. Pupils are actively involved with collective worship and enthusiastically volunteer to take part. They demonstrate their thankfulness and love of singing through their high quality contribution during worship. Because relationships are so strong there is excellent informal monitoring of the impact of collective worship. Staff always attend worship and so can see 'first hand' the kind of things that have a real impact on the pupils. A survey was carried out last year in which pupils were asked their views on the school and in particular on collective worship and religious education. The results were extremely positive. Leaders have used the responses to improve collective worship and the parental partnership. Parents praised the effectiveness of religious education and collective worship as well as the mutual support between the school and the church.

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

Leadership and management of this Methodist church school are currently outstanding. The headteacher uses her strong faith to promote Christian values for the benefit of the whole school community including parents. She has developed excellent relationships with staff in the school, using the Christian values of love, care, equality and justice. As a result, all staff are involved in monitoring the academic progress of pupils and ensuring that every child achieves 'their best'. To reflect the needs of the community, and also the rural location of the school remote from a Methodist place of worship, the leaders identify their approach as a 'Christian' focus rather than specifically Methodist. There are strong links to the parish church of St Mark's which pupils visit for worship and religious studies. This helps develop their spiritual understanding. The foundation governors, which include the Methodist minister, have a very strong partnership with the school although their impact on collective worship is not yet fully reflected in outcomes. Parents say that the Christian values have a significant and positive impact on the school ethos and their children. Leaders recognise and celebrate everyone's strengths. Pupils have an effective voice through their school council and also on an individual basis because leaders know every pupil as an individual who is 'special'. Leaders have responded well to the area for development from the previous inspection to develop pupils' depth of understanding of other faiths. Much of this is through the development of the curriculum but also by developing their awareness through discussing world events and supporting world charities. The area for development to establish places of reflection in the school that are appropriate to the Methodist foundation has been addressed by introducing small areas of reflection within each classroom together with a plain cross. This aspect has been limited because of the lack of space within the school. Leaders make full use of the support available from the circuit although this is very limited because it is the only primary school within the Methodist Circuit. However the Christian Methodist ethos within the school has enabled the headteacher to develop the skills of her staff. An example is the help and support given over a sustained period to a teaching assistant who has trained and developed her skills to become a teacher at the school. Another example is the class teacher who has taken on the role of managing collective worship and religious education. Clearly the school has provided good opportunities to develop the teaching and/or leadership skills of staff to take on more responsibilities and provide skilful support in a more senior role within this church school.